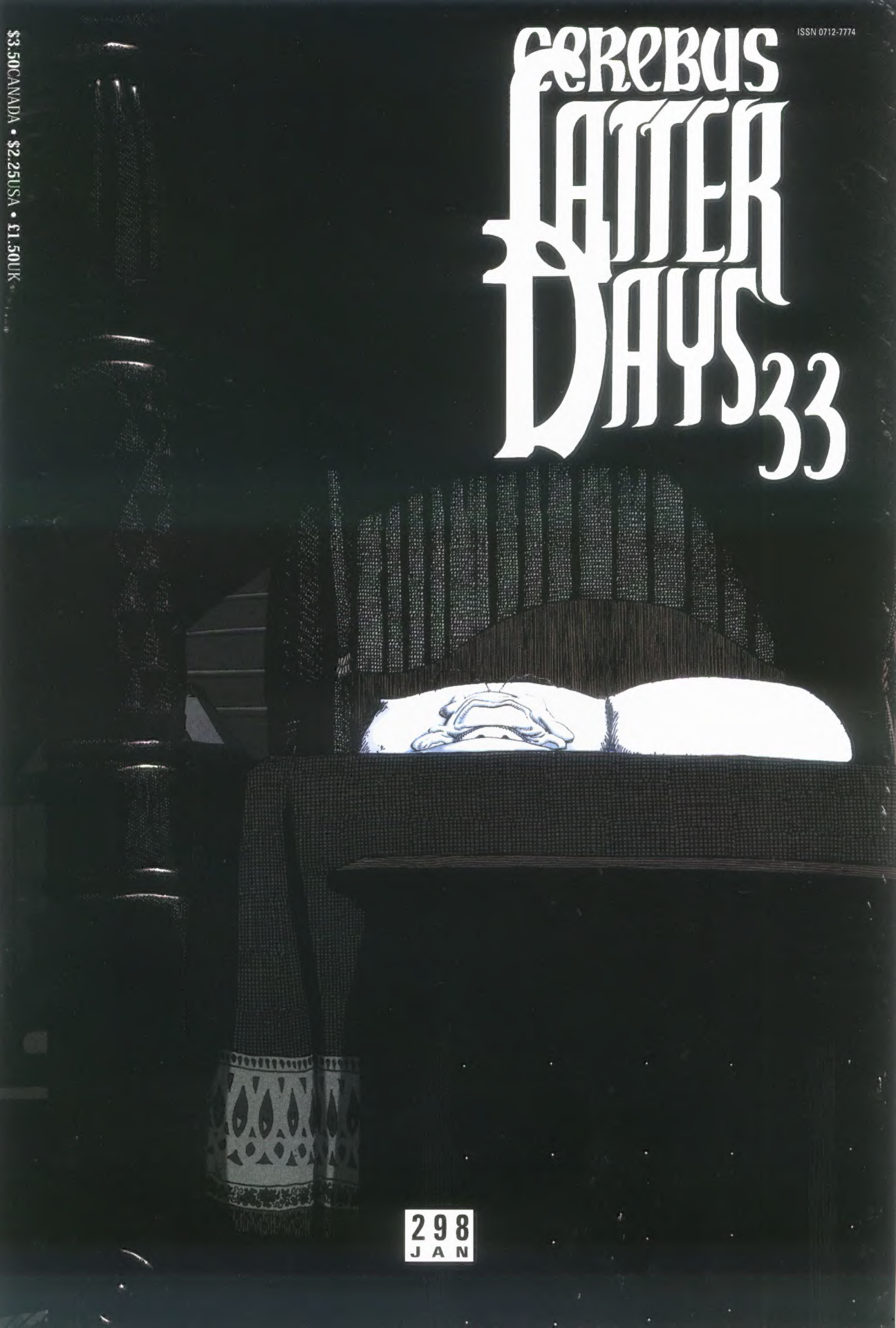
ISSN 0712-7774

CEREBUS LATTER DAYS 33



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298
JAN

Endings VI

18 November. In an eerie example of synchronicity, this will mark the third time that I'll be writing this piece the day that the blue-lines for the previous issue have come in (in this case, 297). God woke me up about 1:00 this morning, bright, lively and ready to get to work. Instead of getting up I spent two hours getting back to sleep which is now proving to be a mistake. I had to finish the Day Prize intro (see later this issue), select the pages for the excerpt…

[This was a kind of mutual screw-up on both Ger's and my part. It was only because I was flipping through 296 looking for something that I noticed that the Day Prize excerpt was promised for this issue in the Short List intro. Emergency phone call to Ger to hurry up and decide who the recipient was. Then there was another one day delay because Remembrance Day fell on a Tuesday this year so, with the banks and post office closed, there wasn't much point in Ger coming downtown on his regular day. I lost two hours going to the memorial service at the Cenotaph—mind you, I'm not complaining, compared to the guys who gave life and limb, my life's a cakewalk]

…figure out where everything has to go in 298 (the interiors of which have been finished since last week) and type this inside front cover. It is now just past the noon prayer and I haven't come near to starting on my page for today (page 13 of issue 299).

Fortunately, it's not all bad news. Gerhard had been doing nothing but griping and complaining over the previous few weeks, which is fine. Different people handle pressure different ways, but it was starting to wear on me. And he was getting his pages done on time, and if he's getting his pages done on time and they look that good, whatever bitching he wants to do is just water—albeit sometimes *scalding* water—off a duck's back. It's only a half hour or so once a week. And then, about two weeks back, he walks in and *he got EIGHT PAGES DONE!* It was the most amazing thing in my entire life. Like the guy who plays on your line and who is an enforcer/trouble-maker just scored the tying goal with five seconds left in the third period in game seven of the Stanley Cup final. Jeez, you're a pain in the ass, but I think I love you all of a sudden!

And long-time reader Ray Earles just sent through a fax ordering a few back issues because he had given his own copies to a new reader and mentioned that he had gotten his subscription copy of 296 on November 15—in Indiana, when it had been mailed on the 12th! Tell *me* there's no such thing as a miracle!

So, as I say, the news is not all bad.

I'm working on the "Aardvark Comments" for 299 and 300 simultaneously. I'll have to make a late call on how many letters are going to fit in around the Day Prize excerpt and then move the rest of the letters that didn't fit in 298 forward to 299. If all goes according to plan, I should be able to over-fill the two remaining "Aardvark Comments" and actually have two or two-and-a-half weeks where all I have to do is draw my part of the book.

Dave's Estimated Date of Completion: 18 December

Ger's Estimated Date of Completion: 24 December

* * * * * *

Department of New Joanne Syndrome

From *Saturday Night* magazine: *"…as a final send-off to Loubert, he created a storyline that featured Cerebus raping a character he had based on her. 'I stopped reading* Cerebus *after that point,' says Loubert. 'It was too painful.'"* Well, first of all, "So" (Issue 94) came out *three years* after Deni and I split up. Second of all, the character of Astoria wasn't based on Deni. It was based on the character of Brigette O'Shaughnessy in *The Maltese Falcon* as portrayed by Mary *Astor*. While it is true that both Deni and O'Shaughnessy are pathological liars, that is the only point of similarity—apart from the fact that I did have Cerebus use my own joking line that I used to use with Deni: "Are we rich yet?" in *High Society* which perhaps led to Deni's revisionist belief that Astoria was based on her. Deni used to tell people that Jaka was based on her as well. *Caveat emptor.*

CEREBUS

NO. 298 JANUARY 2004

DAVE SIM
Creator, Writer
Characters
(interior art & cover)
pencil & ink,
mechanical tones,
lettering

GERHARD
Background Artist
Cover Artist
pencil & ink
Cover Technician

LATTER DAYS

•

PROLOGUE
(Cerebus 266 and 267)

•

BOOK ONE
(Cerebus 268 to 288)

•

BOOK TWO
(Cerebus 289 to 300)

PUBLISHED MONTHLY BY
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DAVE SIM AND GERHARD

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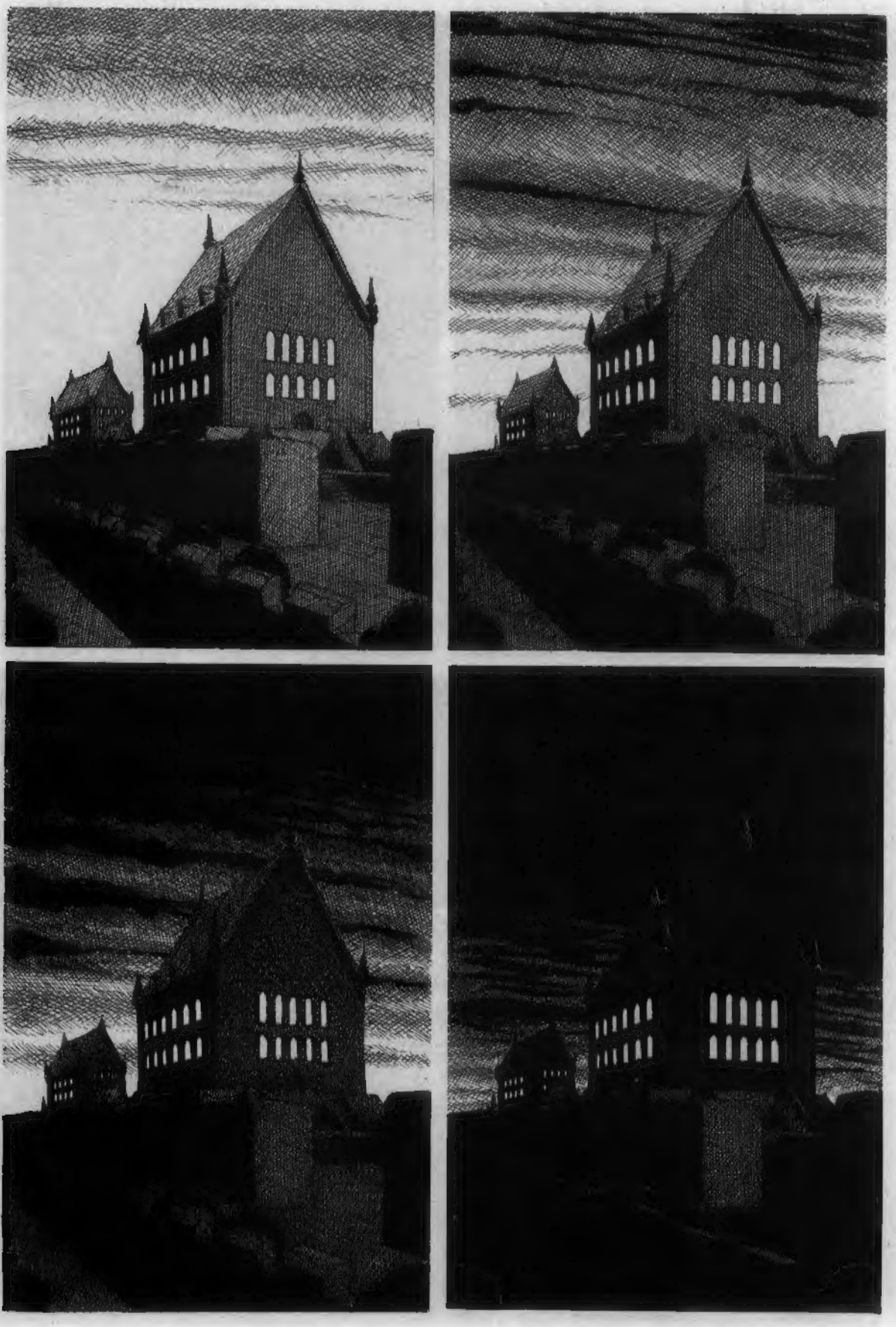

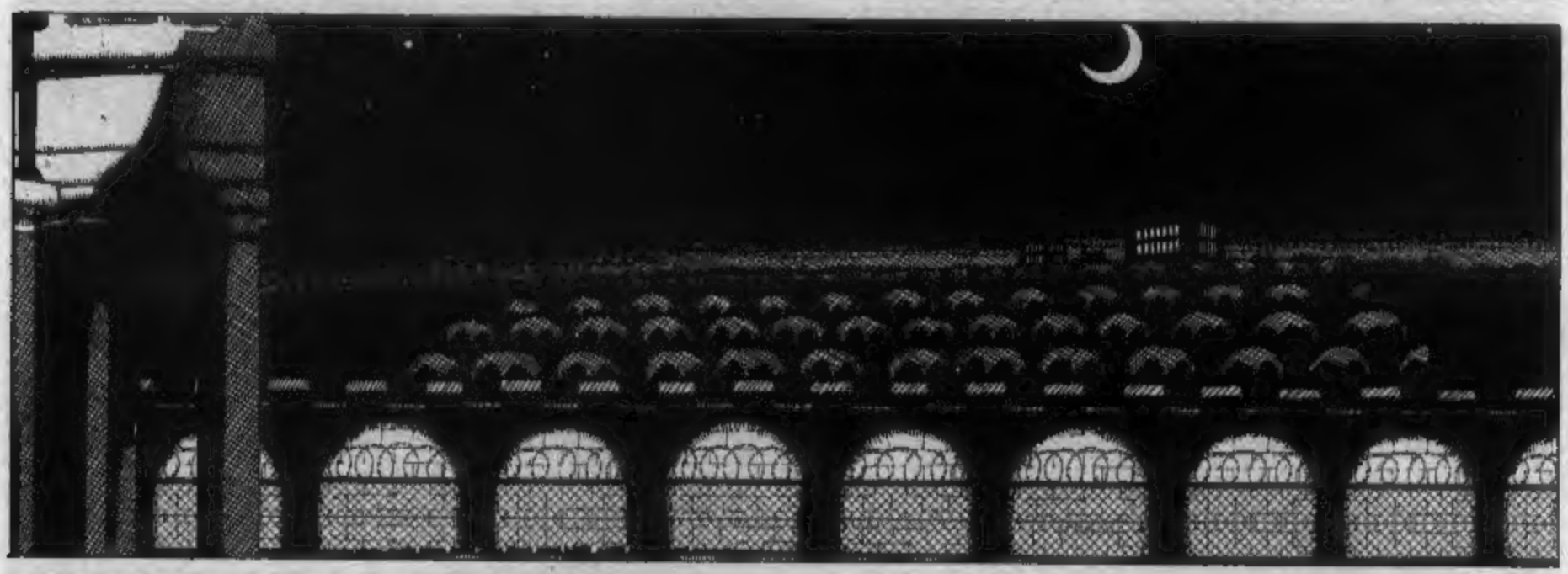

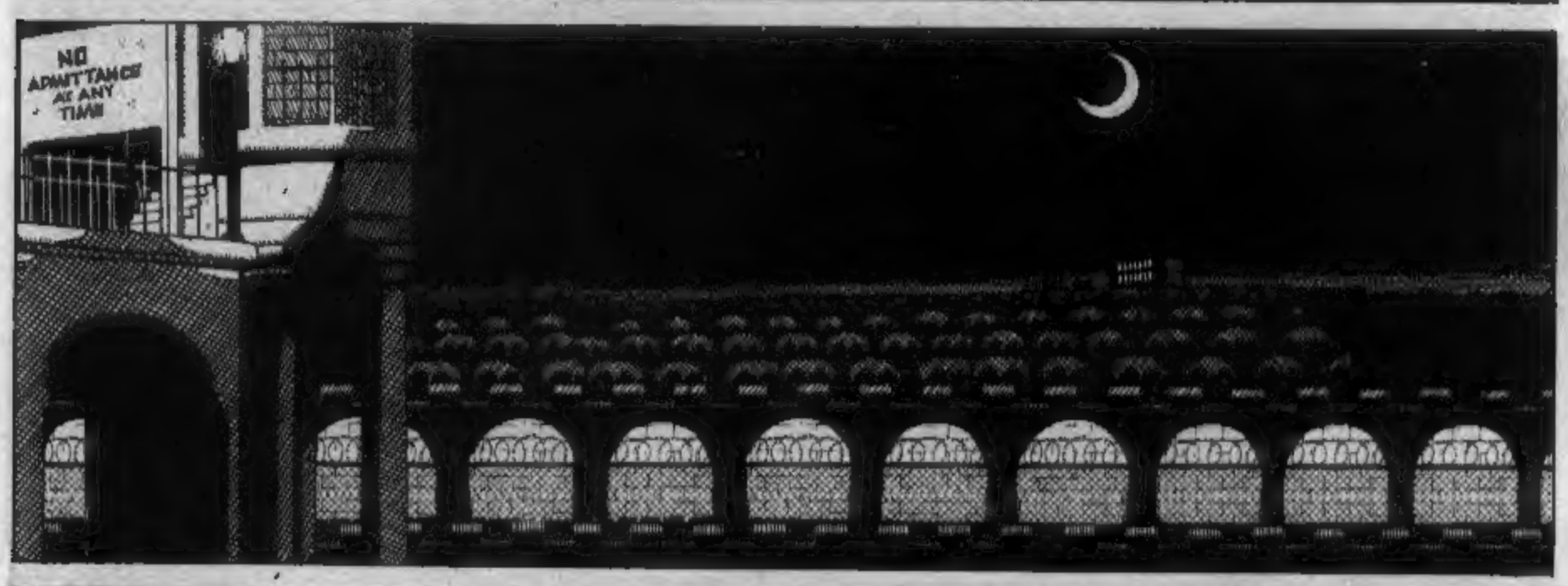
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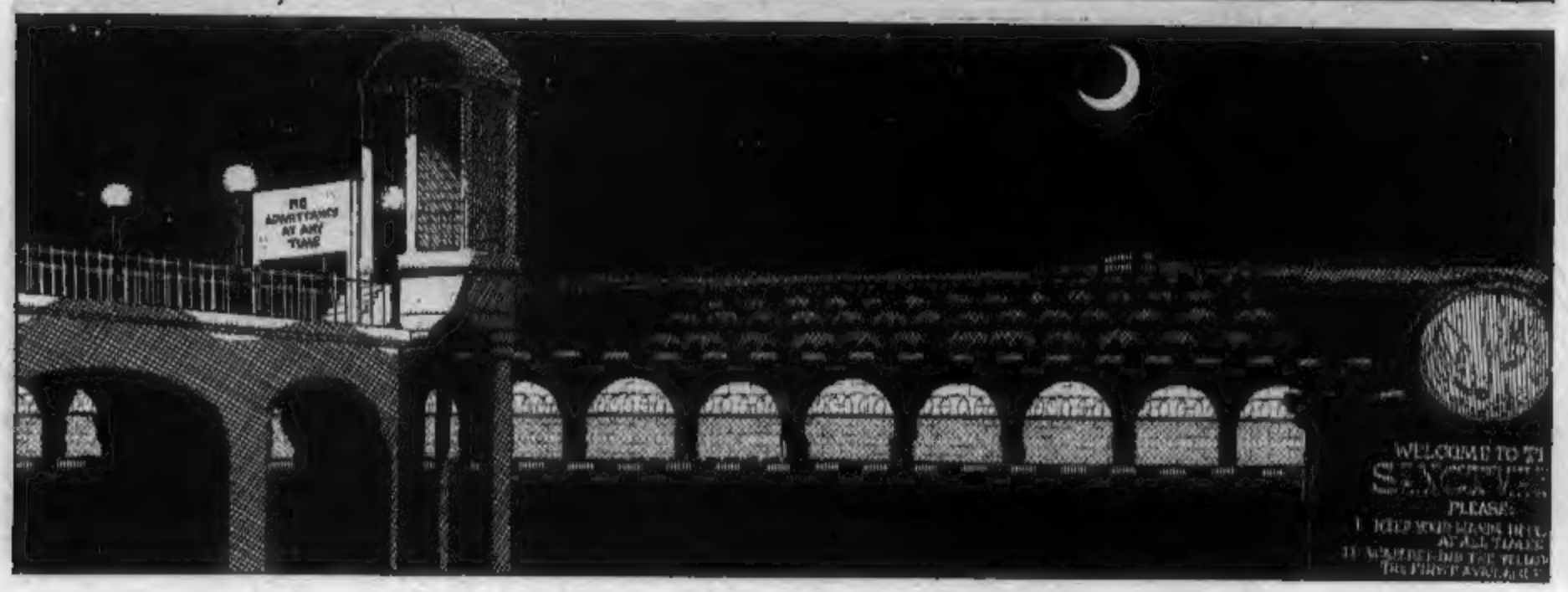
AT ANY
TIME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AT ANY
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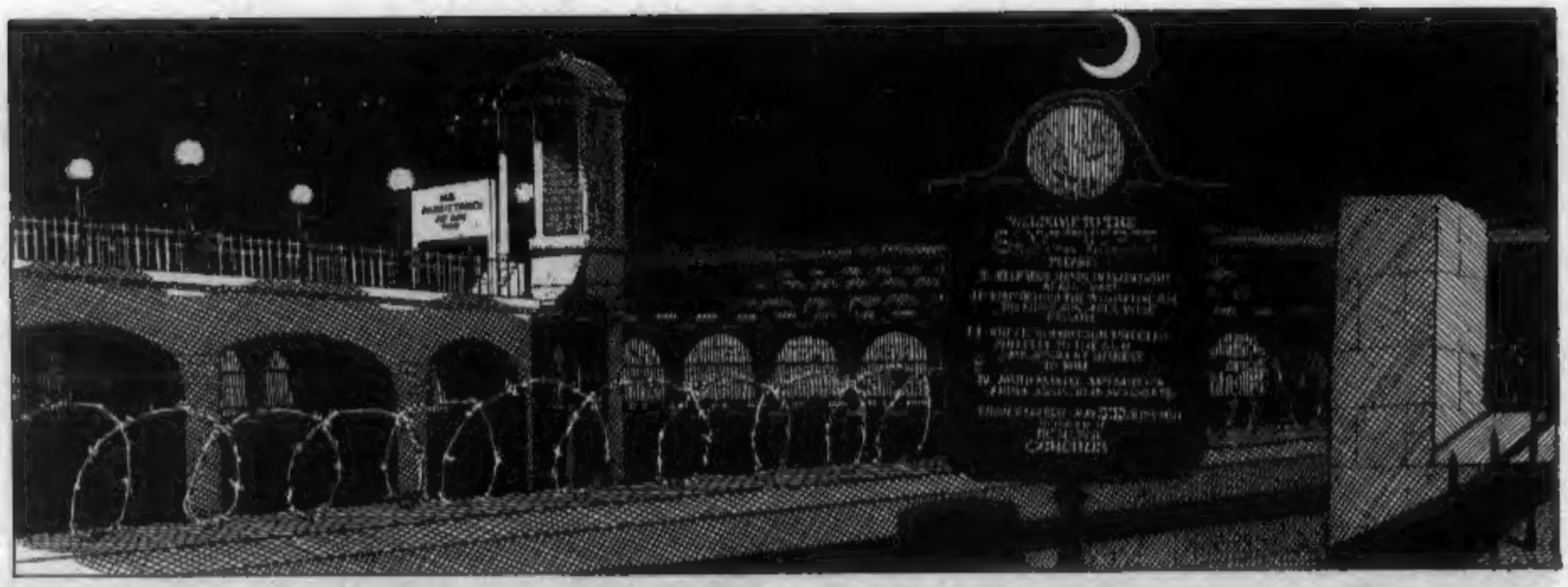
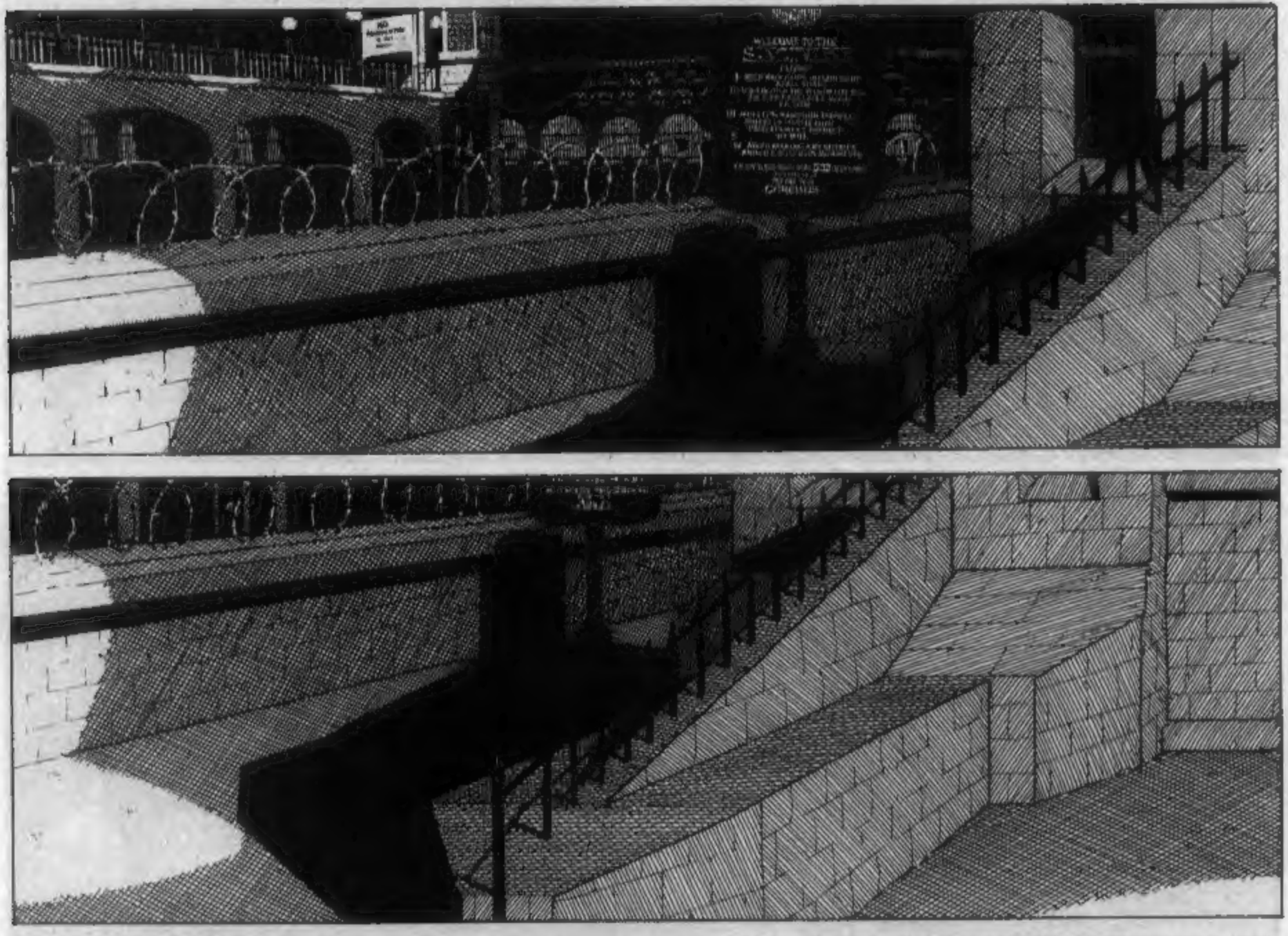
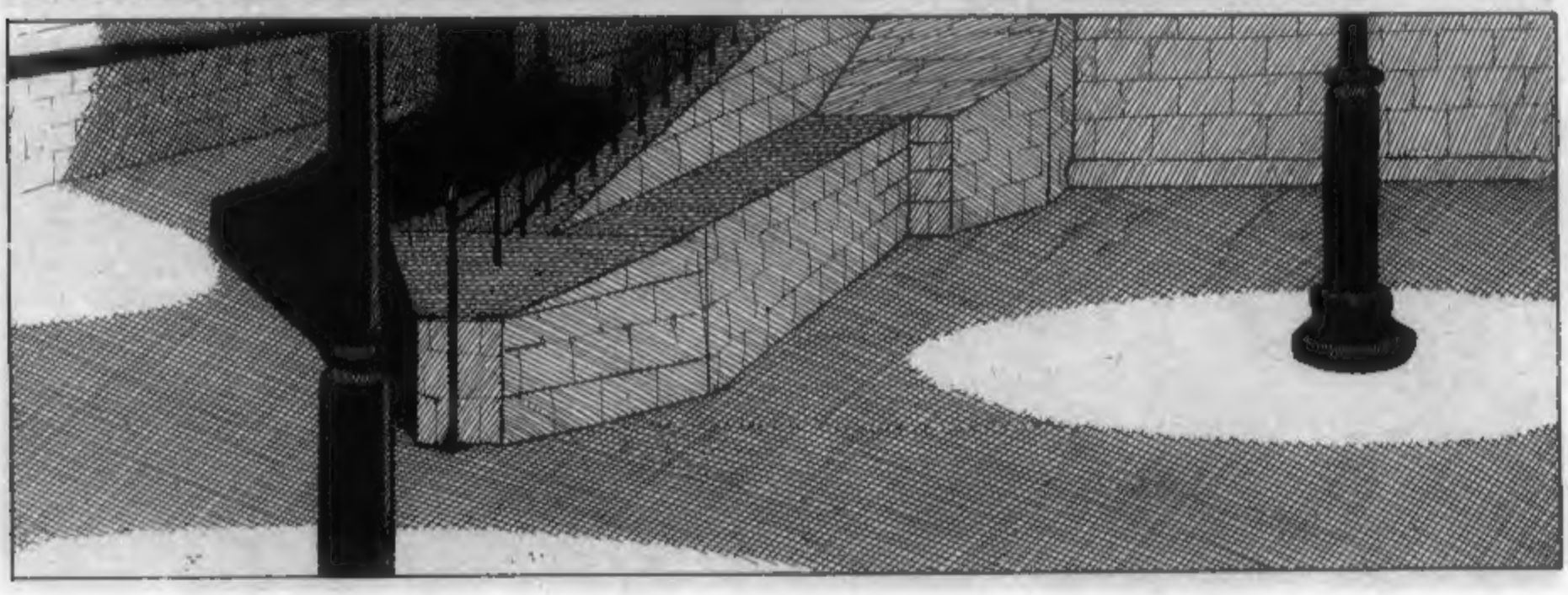
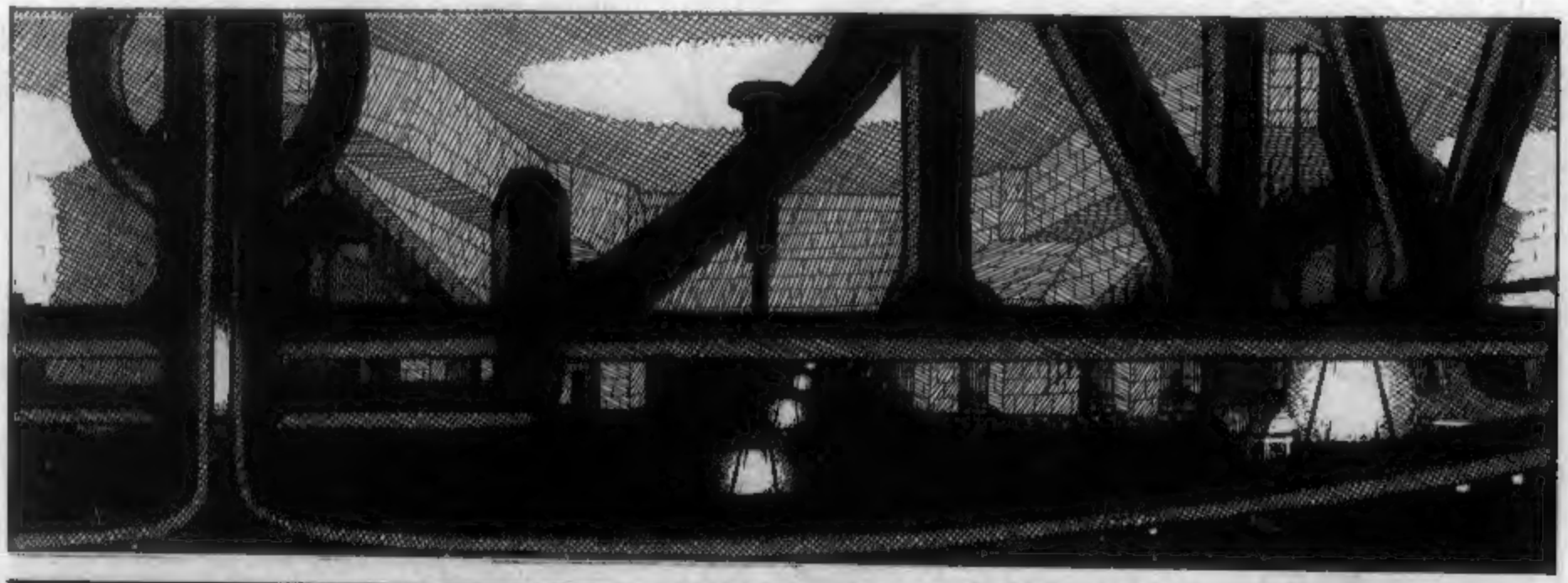
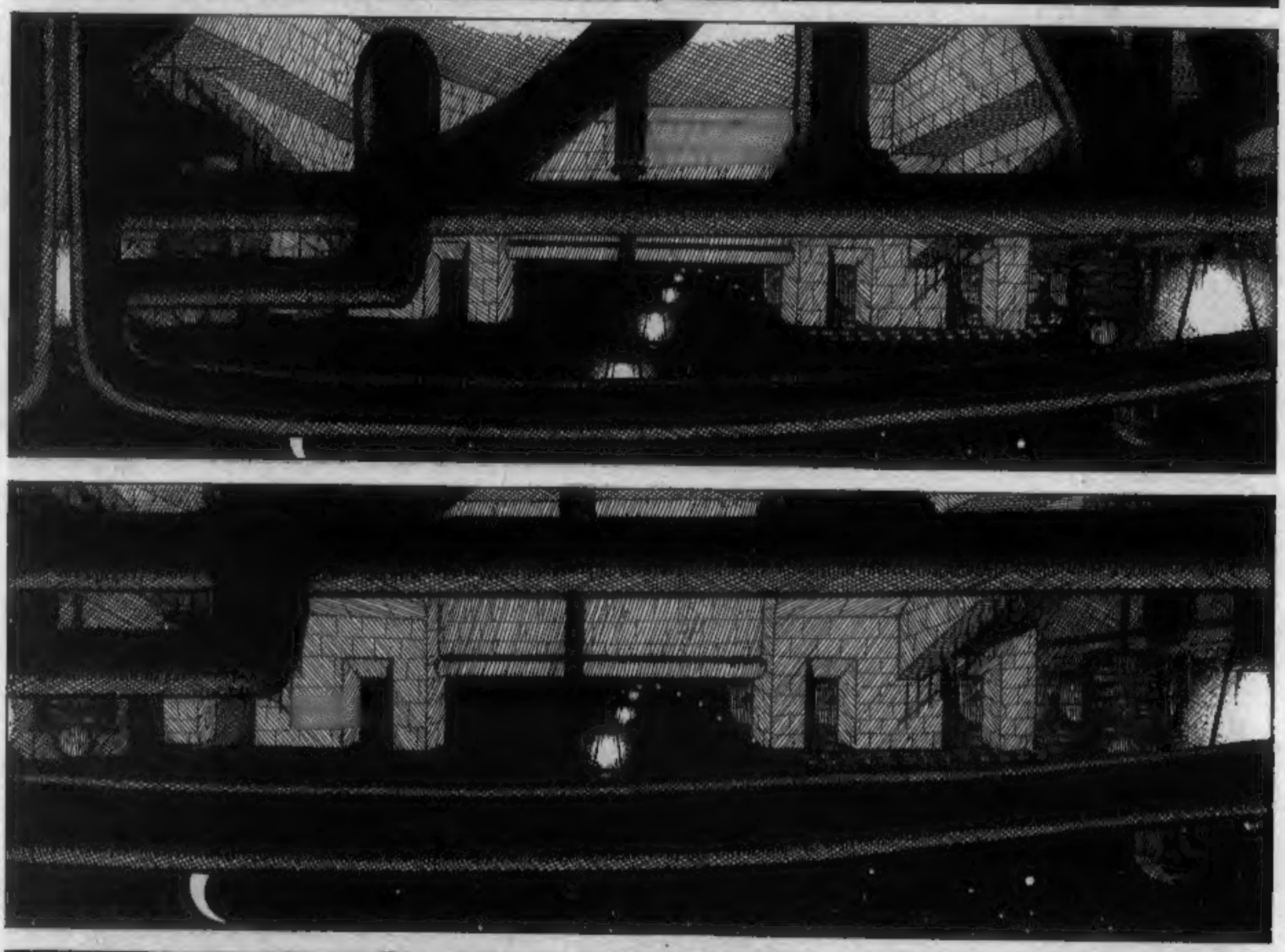
PLEASE!

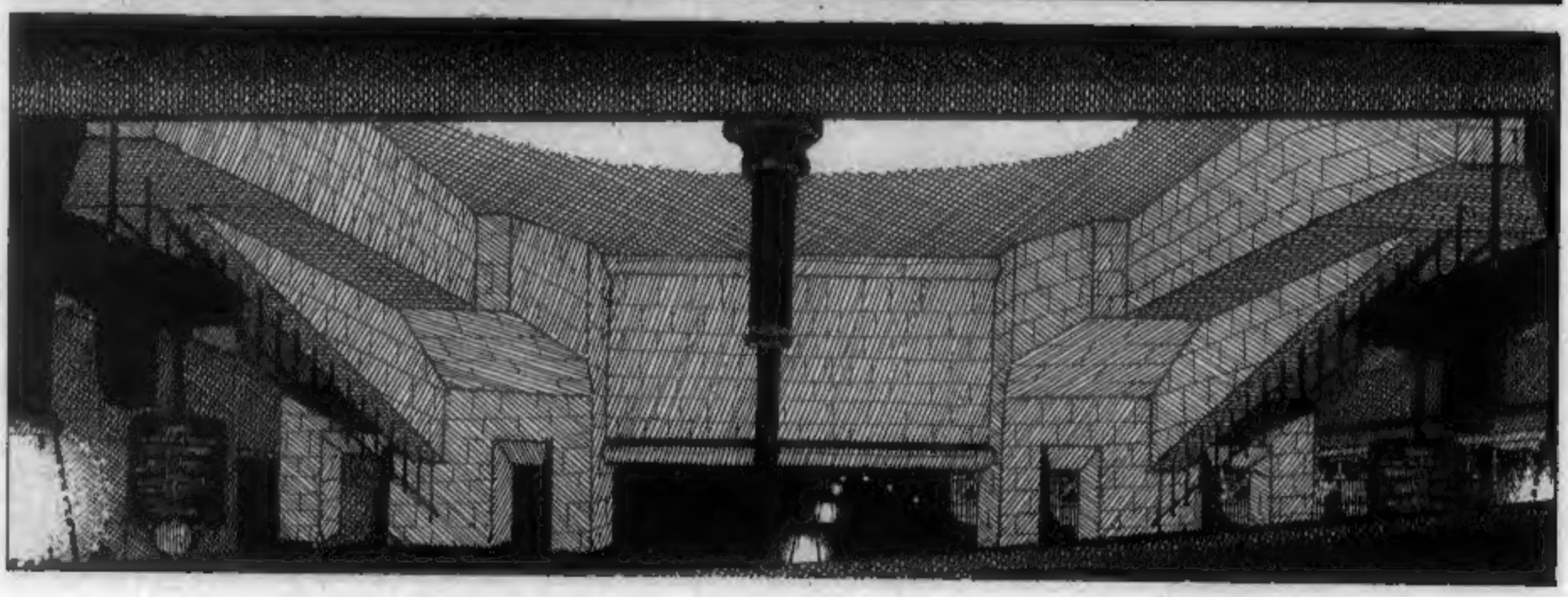


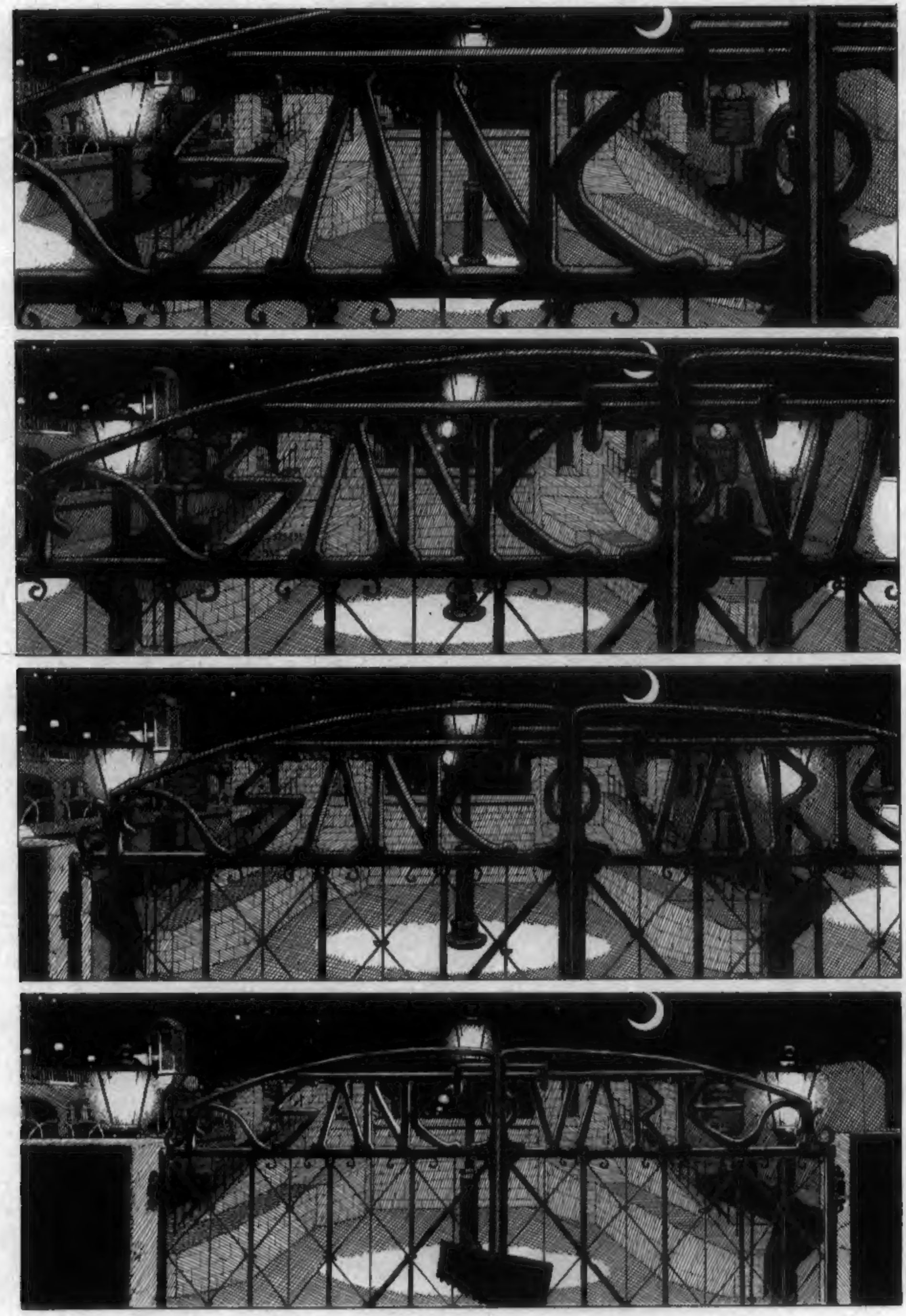








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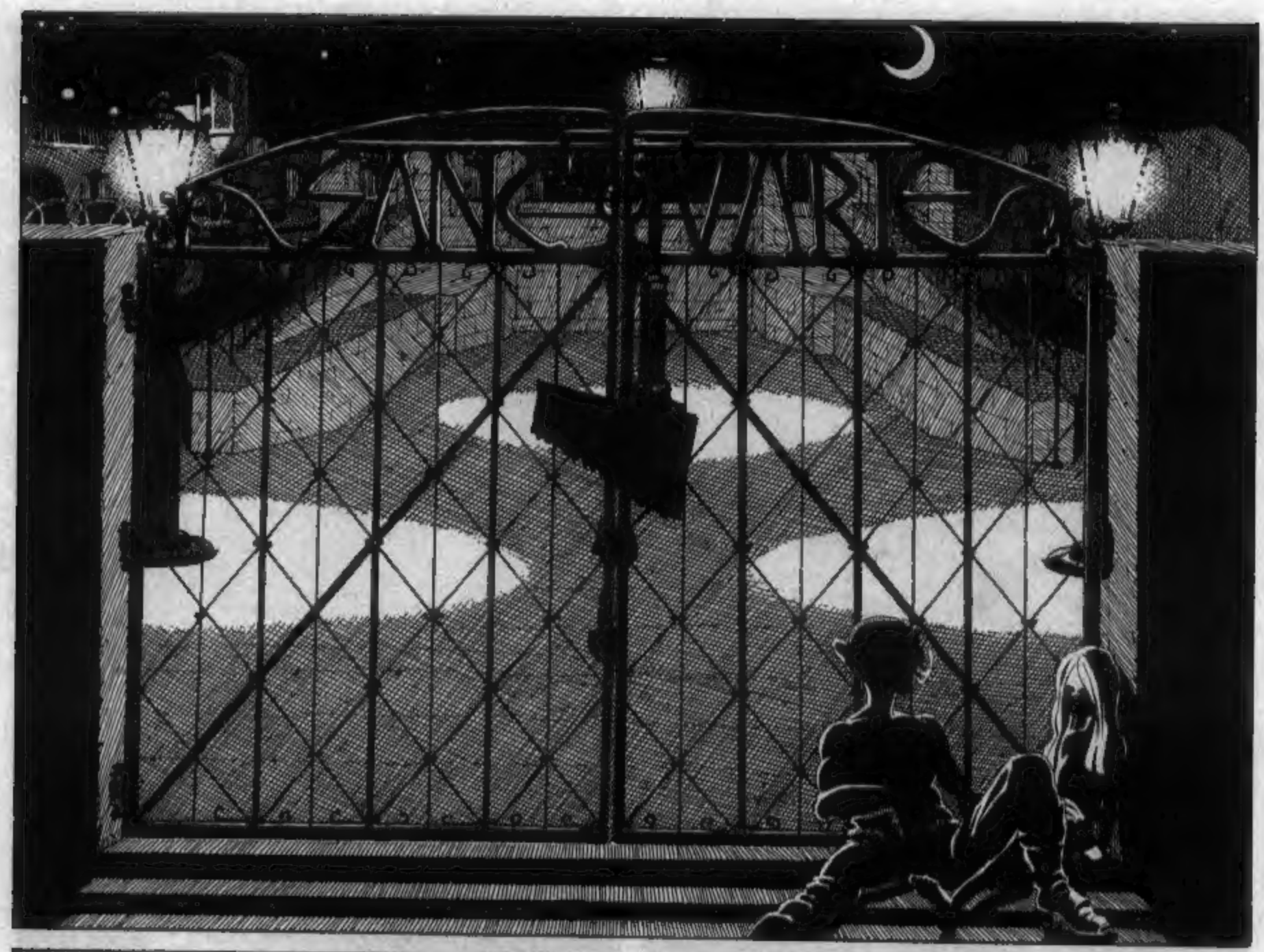
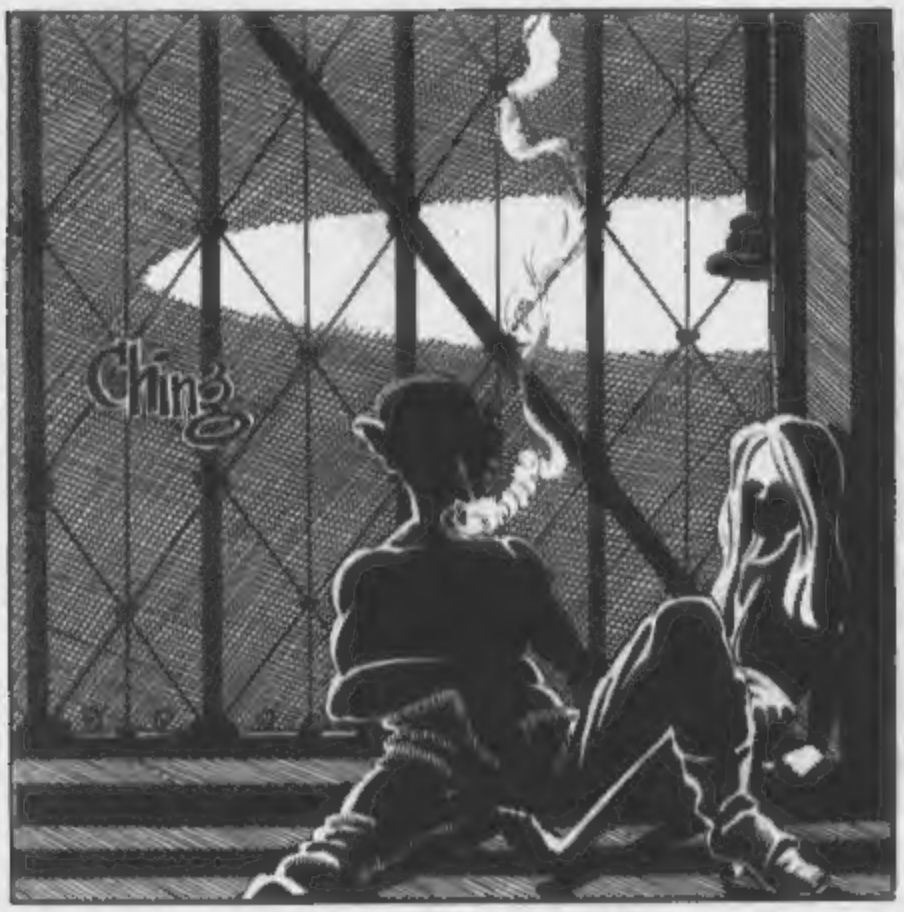
SANG
SANG WAR
SANG WAR


GANG WAR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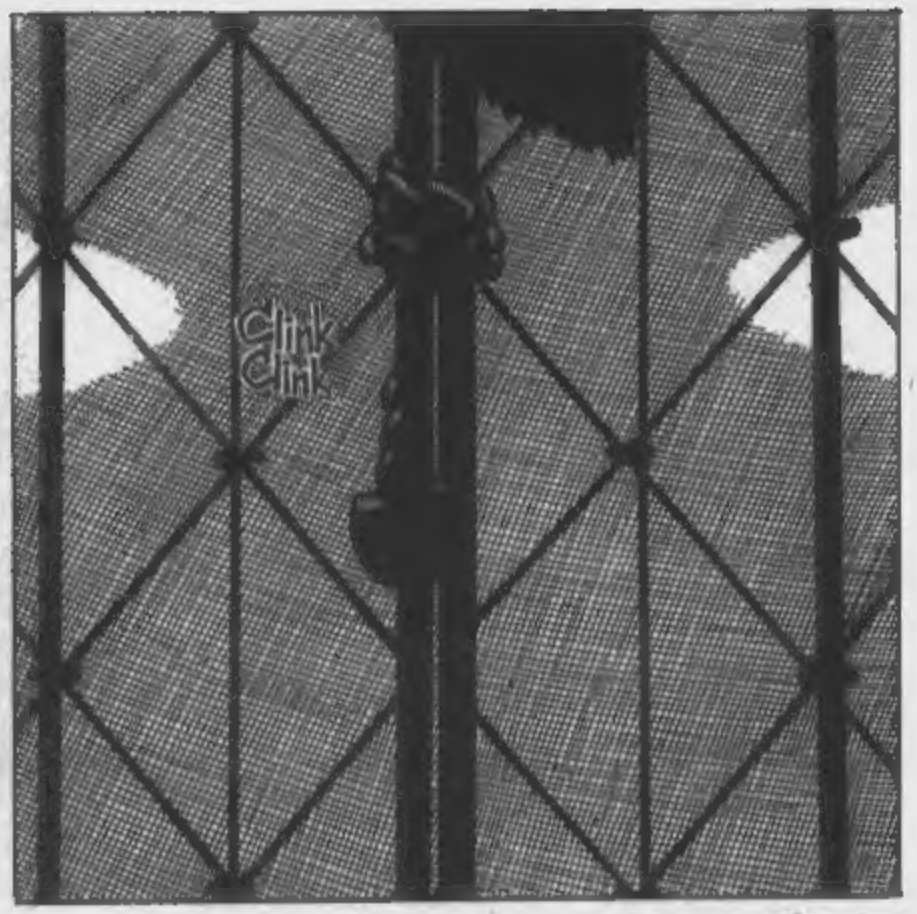
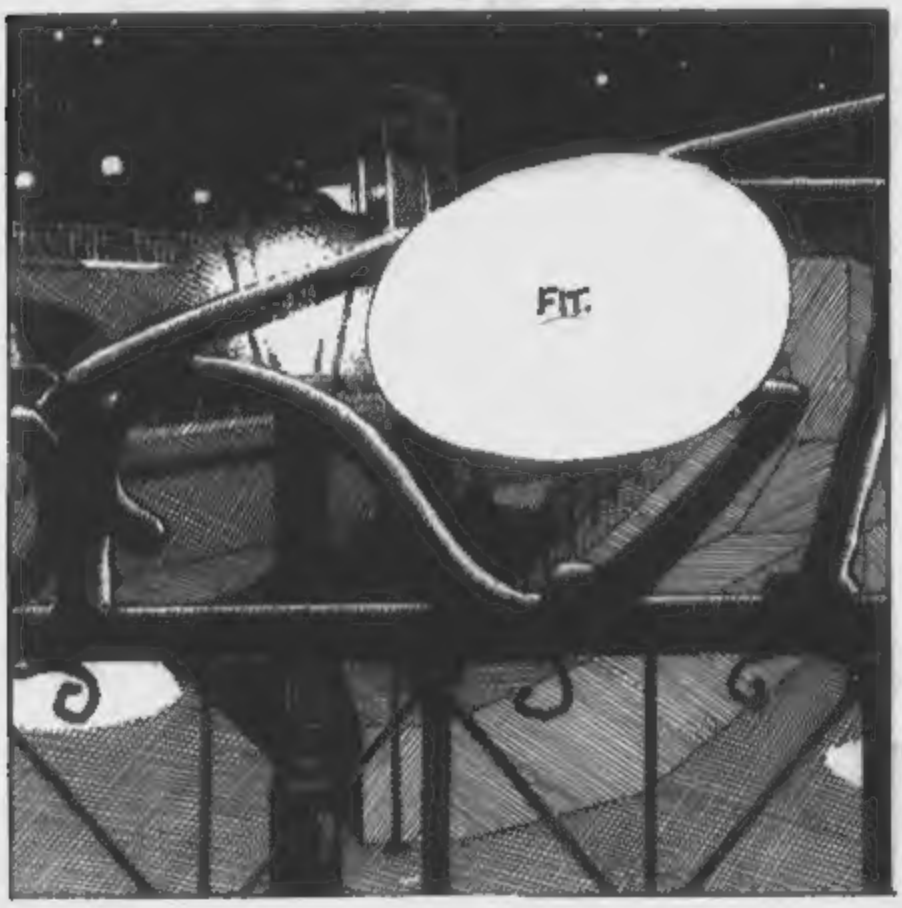

Clink
Clink

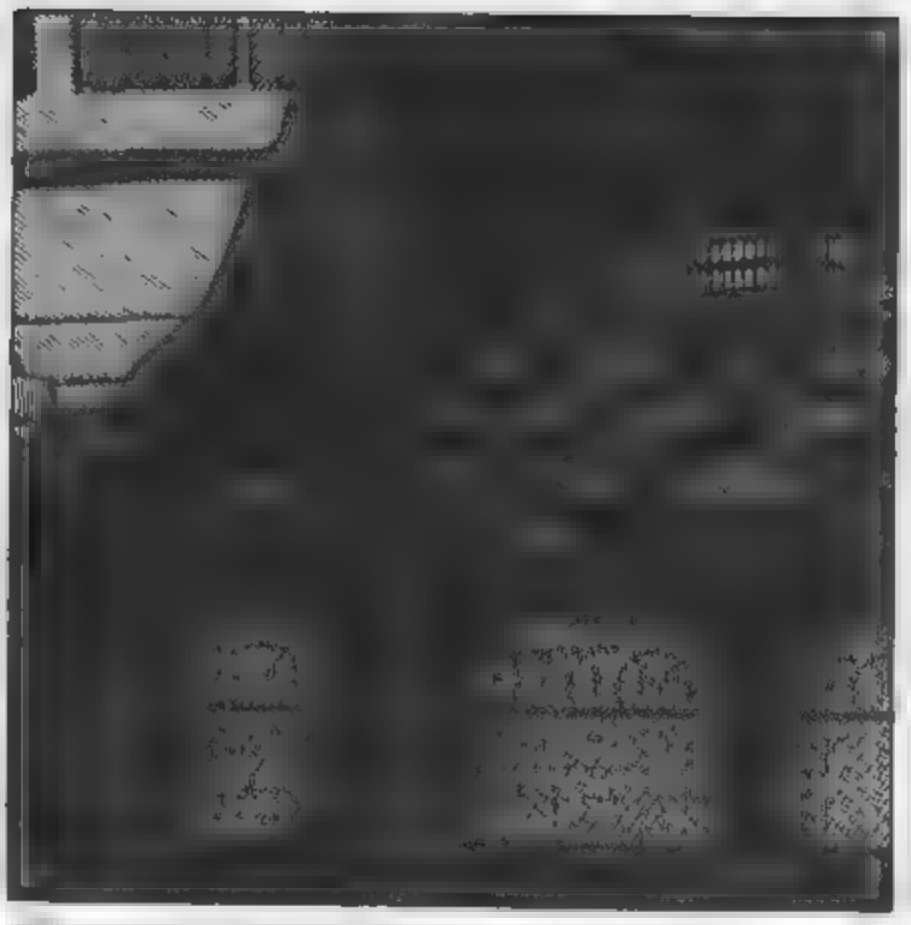
BLOODY OLD-FASHIONED LOCKS THE KEYS NEVER

Clinka
Clinka
Clink


FIT.

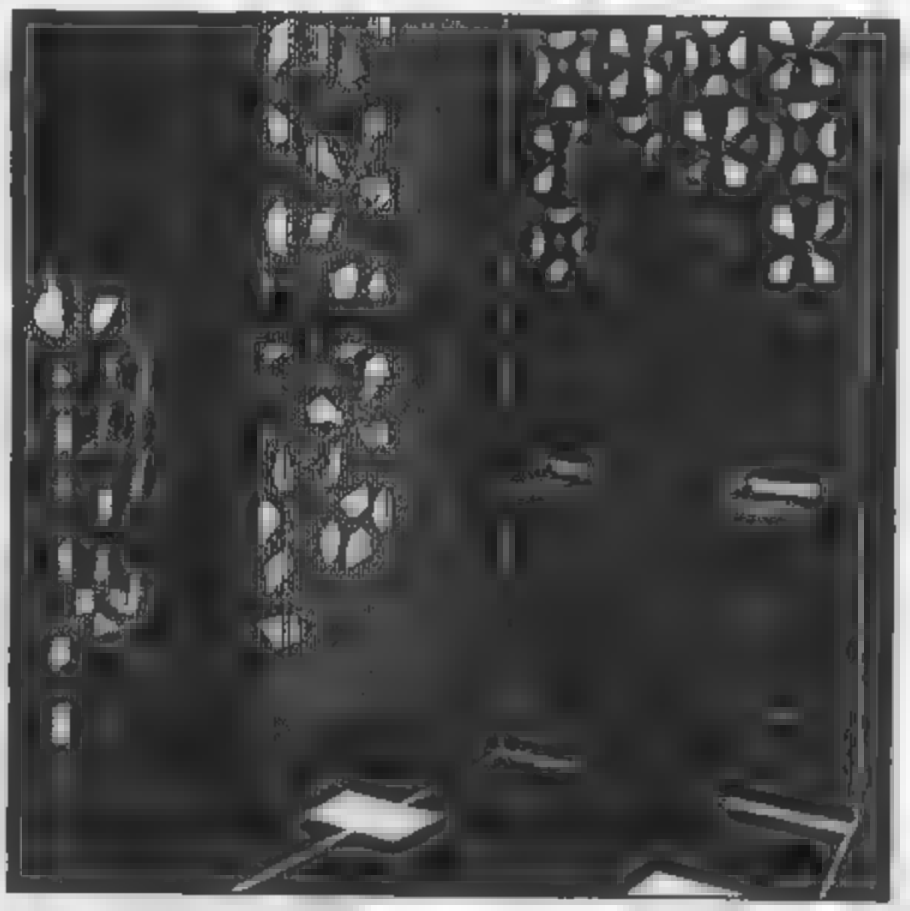
PROPERLY

NO
ADMITTANCE
AT ANY
TIME!



Clink
Clink

COME ON.
COME ON.



Clink Clink

IT'S THE RIGHT KEY . IT JUST SEEMS TO BE-

Clink-a Clink Clink

STUCK.

ON SOMETHING

Clink-a

Clink

KLIK KLAK

AH.

FINALLY.

CREEEEK

SNK

?

WHERE-

...CHAPERONE
US?

HE'S SUPPOSED TO

O'REILLY?

I COULD'VE SWORN HE SAID IT WAS "O'REILLY"

-KLAK

O'REILLY
HAHA

I'M AFRAID I PLAYED A LITTLE GAME... OF...

"FIRST BOOK OF MOSHE, CHAPTER THREE" ON HIM

HeR HeRHeR

HOW MANY TIMES DOES FATHER HAVE TO TELL YOU:

"YOU MUSTN'T MAKE PEOPLE SEE SNAKES THAT AREN'T THERE"?

[redacted] TIMES THAN YOU ALREADY HAVE.

BECAUSE I'VE DONE IT AGAIN.

HeRHeRHeR

[redacted]

JUST LIKE MY OLD MAN, EH?

Heh Heh JUST

CHEF

HA

YOU'RE THE ONLY PERSON IN THE WORLD WHO WOULD DREAM OF CALLING ME THAT

SKICH SKICH

OH?

HEH HEH WELL YOU SEE:

WHEN YOU WERE JUST A LITTLE FELLOW. FOR SOME REASON - YOU COULDN'T SEEM TO PRONOUNCE

SHE SHEP

SO I WOULD SAY SHEP-SHEP N SHEAD

DO YOU KNOW WHAT "SHESHEP ANKH" MEANS FATHER?

WELL NOW- LET YOUR FATHER THINK A MOMENT

AYE

ARE YOUR MOTHER
YOUR MOTHER
FOUND IT IN A
BOOK SOMEWHERE
IT'S A... HEBREW NAME AND IT'S
MEANS

"BELOVED OF GOD"

IT'S TRUE FATHER

MOTHER DID TELL YOU THAT IT WAS HEBREW

AND THAT IT MEANT "BELOVED OF GOD"

SKETCH

SKETCH

BUT

ACTUALLY

ACTUALLY IT'S EGYPTIAN

AND IT MEANS

"LIVING SYMBOL"

AH

SCORE ONE.

FOR NEW JOANNE EH?

HEH.

YOU KNOW?

WAY BACK IN THE BEGINNING. WHEN YOUR MOTHER AND I FIRST

GOT TOGETHER

SHE WAS ABSOLUTELY TERRIFIED OF REGEMBLING THE FIRST JOANNE

HEHHEHHEHH

FATHER?

IF I HAD A CROWN FOR EVERY TIME WE'VE HAD THIS CONVERSATION

I'D BE A VERY WEALTHY MAN

WHAT ACTUALLY HAPPENED WAS

WHEN YOU FIRST TOLD MOTHER THAT YOU LOVED HER SHE HAD ONE OF HER "INSIGHTS" SHE TURNED TO YOU AND SHE SAID "IT'S BECAUSE I REMIND YOU OF JOANNE, ISN'T IT?"

AND YOU SAID, "AYE." AND THEN YOU ASKED HER, "DOES THAT BOTHER YOU?"

AND SHE SAID, "NO, NOT AT ALL. I HAVE ALWAYS FELT - SINCE I WAS A YOUNG GIRL - THAT JOANNE AND I WERE SPIRITUAL SOULMATES."

HOW IS YOUR MOTHER?

HA HA HA HA

SHE IS IN SPLENDID HEALTH (SORRY TO DISAPPOINT YOU) NOW

I'LL ASK YOU ONE

SKATCH

Day Prize Recipient 2004.

Askari Hodari

By Glenn Brewer

I couldn't have been more pleased when Gerhard selected Glenn Brewer's *Askari Hodari* ("Heroes Bringing Hope to the Hopeless") as the Day Prize recipient this year. Although I (obviously) have the greatest respect and admiration for the other books I put on the Short List, my personal preference for photo-realism in comic books is no secret and Glenn Brewer has put his own stamp on the photo-realism branch of our medium with this series. His first issue—which I saw two years ago at S.P.A.C.E. (*Askari Hodari* is the only repeat nominee for the Day Prize: issue one in 2001 and issue two in 2002) had a lot of potential. There was some stiffness in his figures and facial expressions (always a potential pitfall when you're tracing from photographs), but it was one of those things that you just knew was going to come with time. I have to say that I admire his determination to stick with single line hatchwork as opposed to cross-hatching in his inking. (the high watermark for that look in the comic-book field remains John Totleben's inking on *Swamp Thing*. And it takes a steady hand to pull off. I still remember Bissette talking about Totelben doing those long, long, long parallel pen strokes. Steve would hear him in the next room with the methodical sound of the nib on the page—shhhhkkk Shhhhkkk. Shhhkkk. Shhkkk.—followed by an explosive "Son of a *bitch*." When he "missed" and two of the lines touched).

The sequence I've printed here, from issue 3, is where I really started to see the elements of Glenn's style (notably the upper right panel on the first page of the excerpt and panel 5 on the 3rd page) starting to pull it together. Not only is he attempting one of the most difficult "ink" looks in comics, he's also attempting the near-impossible task of doing the "what if super-heroes really existed in our world?" riff à la *Watchmen* and *Astro City* and *Marvels*. When you have traditional super-heroes on one side of you and those three titles staking out large slices of turf on the other side, you are definitely not going to be "graded against the curve" on your final exam.

Glenn compounds the problem for himself with an "inner city" motif. There is a definite in-built and unassailable credibility in being black if your audience is going to be predominantly white (and predominantly hand-wringing, pants-wetting liberals in the case of the comic-book field), but relative to your own "bruthas" you run a major Oreo-cookie risk (black on the outside, white on the inside) if you don't have your "inner city" chops down. In short, whatever meagre wiggle room you had in the realism sweepstakes with the likes of Alan Moore and Alex Ross breathing down your neck is narrowed dramatically when you're facing the same problem faced by, say, Spike Lee—albeit in a much smaller venue like the comic-book field. Each issue, like each Spike Lee movie, is going to re-open the question of "Are you still black enough?" (falling prey to the hand-wringing, pants-wetting white liberal assertion, "I don't think it's a matter of black or white, I think it's just important to have a good story about human beings" being a sure sign that you've turned Oreo-cookie on your audience). Obviously it isn't a question any white person can properly pose, let alone answer. As a writer, particularly with this sequence, the "voice" in the story rings true to me. But that's a *white* writer's ear. You can tool a *white* writer's ear with inner city patter and rhythms that are ten years out of date.

Judging by the letters, for Glenn, it's a case of "so far so good":

"These books blew me away. Not only was the storytelling rich and informative, but the art takes the story to another level. I intend to promote your book on the museum before the weekend is out," writes "Omar" of www.blacksuperhero.com.

Glenn (interesting innovation this) even runs credits on the first page of each issue, listing the names of his "actors and actresses"—the friends and acquaintances he has poze (typo, but I think I'll leave it that way) for his photo reference. Glenn himself appears as "Dreadi" (see illustration).

"Faith" writes "I love your book. I especially like the fact that the protagonists are black. As a black female, I am interested in seeing more positive portrayals of people of all colors, including female characters. The art is top notch and the storyline has me hooked. I'll be bugging you every time I see you until the new book comes out."

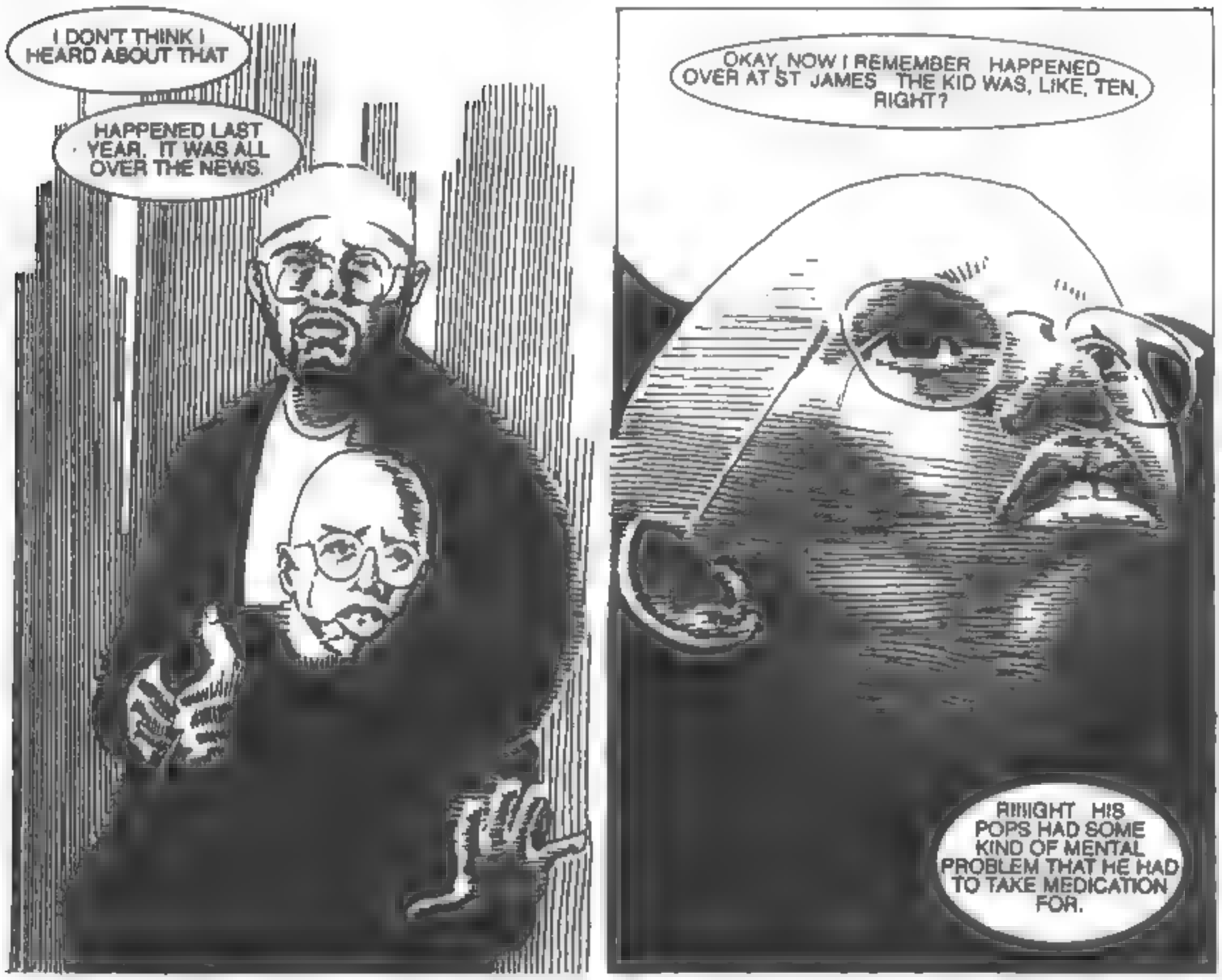
This, it seems to me, is something of a coup for Glenn, since one of the central plotlines in *Askari Hodari* involves Lorain Taylor, a black Oprah-sized woman attorney ("played" by Tameka Pressley)—involved with a ne'er-do-well Detective, David Tess ("played" by Joe Brooks)—who is also the object of unrequited affection on the part of one of the Askari Hodari, Dietrick Romellus ("played" by Cam'ron Davis), in his civilian janitorial identity.

Romellus: You mean I'm a janitor. Sweepin' floors doesn't make me less of a man, Lorain. Your "man" is a big time police detective and he treats you like shit!

(continued after excerpt)

SHADOW PRESS

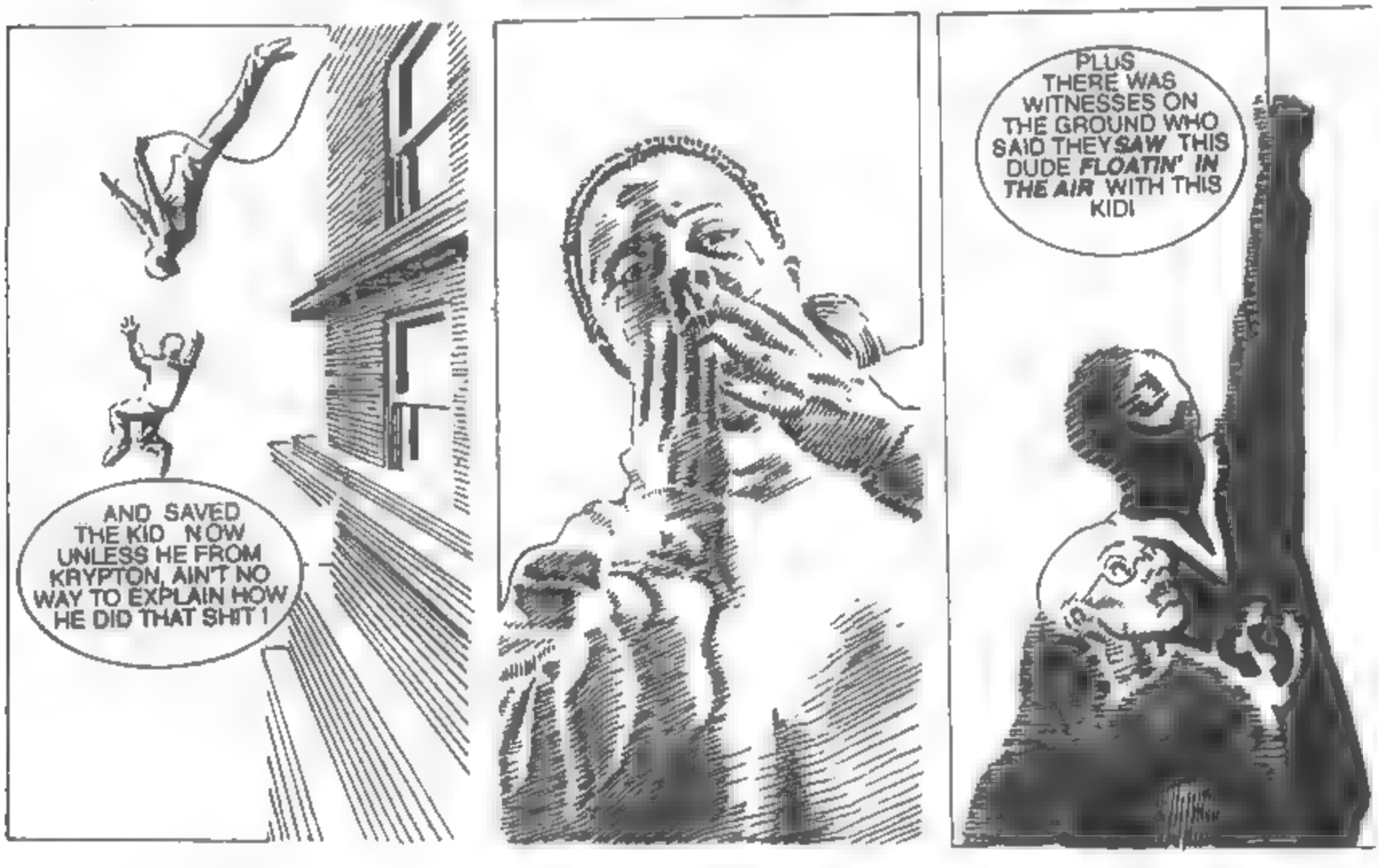
The Day Prize recipient for 2003


I DON'T THINK I HEARD ABOUT THAT
HAPPENED LAST YEAR. IT WAS ALL OVER THE NEWS.
OKAY, NOW I REMEMBER HAPPENED OVER AT ST JAMES THE KID WAS, LIKE, TEN, RIGHT?
RIIIGHT HIS POPS HAD SOME KIND OF MENTAL PROBLEM THAT HE HAD TO TAKE MEDICATION FOR.

SO ONE DAY THIS CAT DECIDES NOT TO TAKE HIS PILLS AND, OF COURSE, HE START BUGGIN' OUT.
START TALKIN' 'BOUT ALIENS ARE COMIN' TO TAKE HIS SON SO THEY CAN DO EXPERIMENTS ON 'IM TELLS THE MOTHER HE D RATHER HIS SON BE DEAD!

ASKARI HODARI by Glenn Brewer

SO THIS CRAZY MUTHAFUCKA THROWS HIS KID OFF THE BUILDING!
NOW BOTH THE MOTHER AND THE KID.
SAID THAT ONE OF THE A-MEN *FLEW* OFF THE ROOF-TOP


AND SAVED THE KID NOW UNLESS HE FROM KRYPTON, AIN'T NO WAY TO EXPLAIN HOW HE DID THAT SHIT!
PLUS THERE WAS WITNESSES ON THE GROUND WHO SAID THEY *SAW* THIS DUDE *FLOATIN' IN THE AIR* WITH THIS KID!

SHADOW PRESS

The Day Prize recipient for 2003

THINGS HAPPEN SO FAST SOMETIMES THAT WHAT PEOPLE THINK THEY SAW ISN'T WHAT ACTUALLY HAPPENED.
MAYBE THE GUY HAD ROPE OR A BUNGEE CORD
WHAT UP FELLAS
WHAT'S UP DIETRICK?

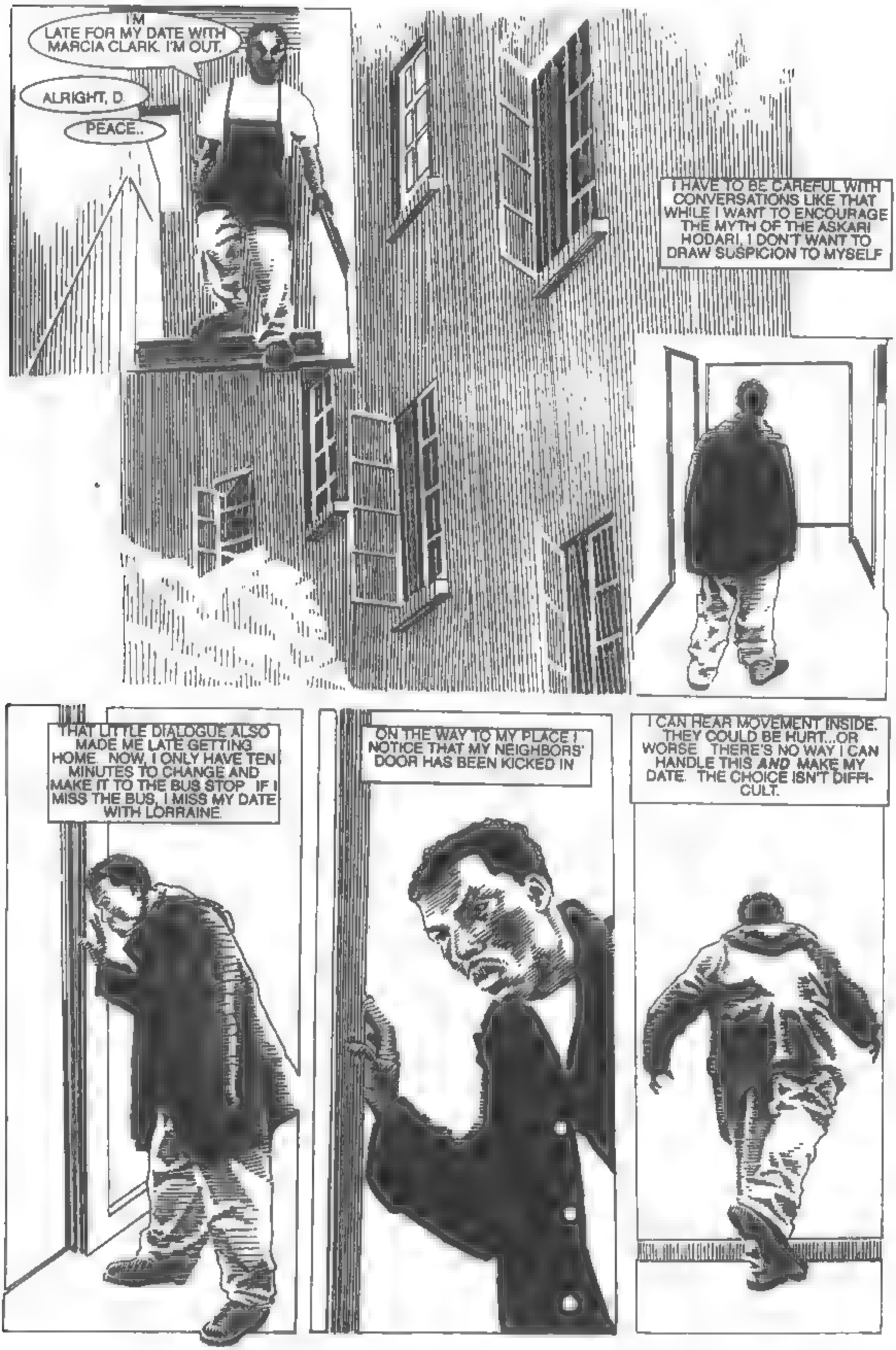
WELL! IF IT AIN'T THE OVER-WEIGHT LOVER HIMSELF. WHERE YOU HEADED--MARCIA CLARK'S OFFICE?
JEALOUS?
YEAH, *RIGHT!* I DON'T FUCK WIT BIG BROADS, BRAH.
A, WHAT DO YOU THINK THE ASKARI HODARI ARE? AGENT SCULLY OVER HERE THINK THEY REGULAR MEN. I SAY DAT'S BULLSHIT--NO WAY REGULAR MEN COULD DO WHAT THEY DO!

ASKARI HODARI by Glenn Brewer

I WON'T GO SO FAR AS TO SAY THEY'RE GHOSTS LIKE SOME PEOPLE SUGGEST, BUT I AGREE WITH YOU. THERE'S DEFINITELY SOMETHING SUPERNATURAL ABOUT THEM. THAT BANK ROBBERY THEY STOPPED TWO MONTHS AGO IS PROOF OF THAT
THAT'S RIGHT! WE ALL SAW IT ON THE NEWS IT WAS TWO OF 'EM. CAT HIT 'EM POINT BLANK WIT A SHOTGUN AND DROPPED 'EM. THEN, HIS BOY STOOD DIRECTLY OVER HIM AND PUT A HOLE CLIP FROM A' ASSAULT RIFLE INTO HIS ASS!
AND I DON'T KNOW ABOUT YOU BROTHERS, BUT I THOUGHT BODY ARMOR ONLY COVERED YOUR CHEST AND BACK. THAT GUY GOT SHOT EVERYWHERE EXCEPT FOR UNDER HIS FEET
PLUS, ANY COP WILL TELL YOU THAT BEING HIT WITH ONE BULLET IN THE VEST HURTS LIKE HELL AND THAT IT TAKES AT LEAST A MINUTE OR TWO TO CATCH YOUR BREATH. THIS GUY JUMPED UP AS SOON AS THE ROBBERS WENT TO RELOAD AND TOOK BOTH OF THEM OUT! IF THAT'S NOT SUPERHUMAN, I DON'T KNOW WHAT IS.
I NEVER THOUGHT ABOUT IT LIKE THAT YOU GOT A POINT, D

SHADOW PRESS

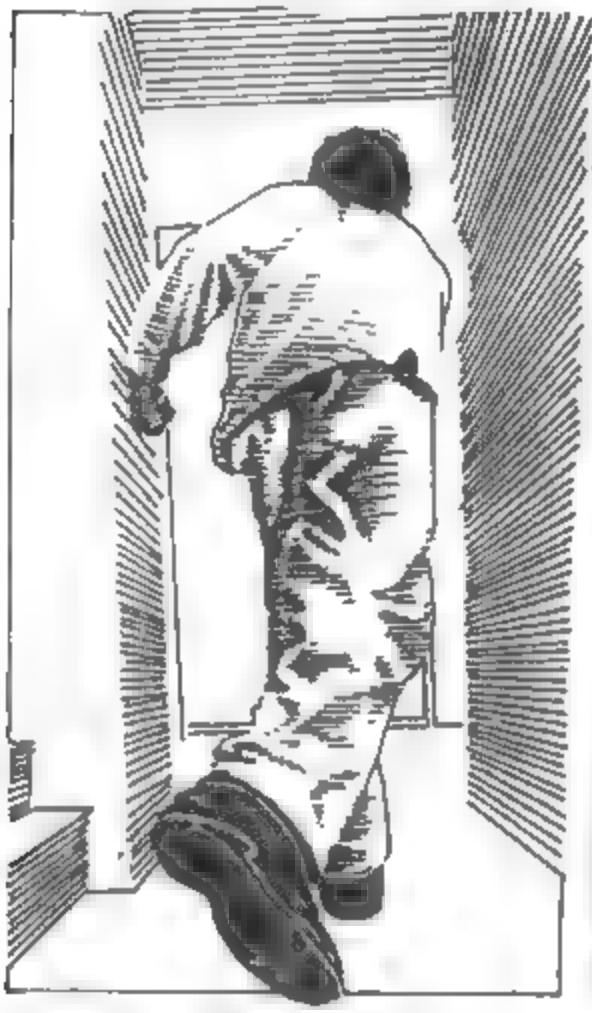
The Day Prize recipient for 2003


I'M LATE FOR MY DATE WITH MARCIA CLARK. I'M OUT.
ALRIGHT, D.
PEACE..
I HAVE TO BE CAREFUL WITH CONVERSATIONS LIKE THAT WHILE I WANT TO ENCOURAGE THE MYTH OF THE ASKARI HODARI, I DON'T WANT TO DRAW SUSPICION TO MYSELF
THAT LITTLE DIALOGUE ALSO MADE ME LATE GETTING HOME. NOW, I ONLY HAVE TEN MINUTES TO CHANGE AND MAKE IT TO THE BUS STOP. IF I MISS THE BUS, I MISS MY DATE WITH LORRAINE.
ON THE WAY TO MY PLACE I NOTICE THAT MY NEIGHBORS' DOOR HAS BEEN KICKED IN
I CAN HEAR MOVEMENT INSIDE. THEY COULD BE HURT...OR WORSE. THERE'S NO WAY I CAN HANDLE THIS *AND* MAKE MY DATE. THE CHOICE ISN'T DIFFICULT.

ASKARI HODARI by Glenn Brewer

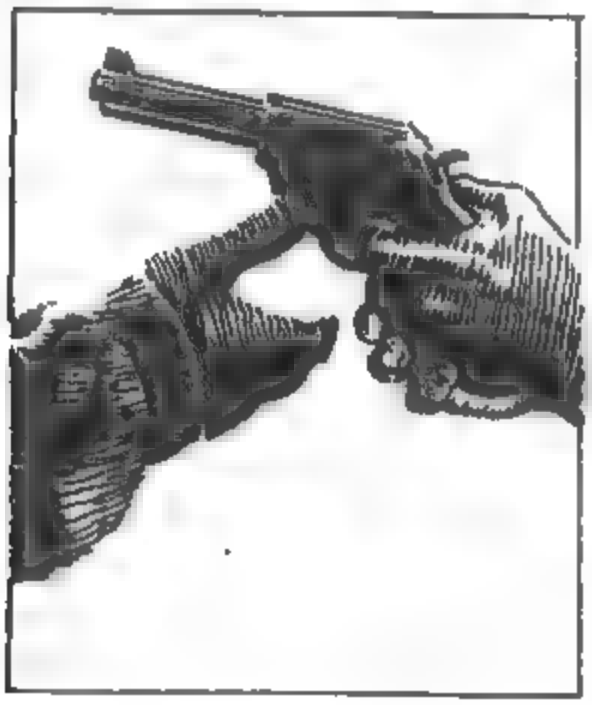
SHADOW
PRESS

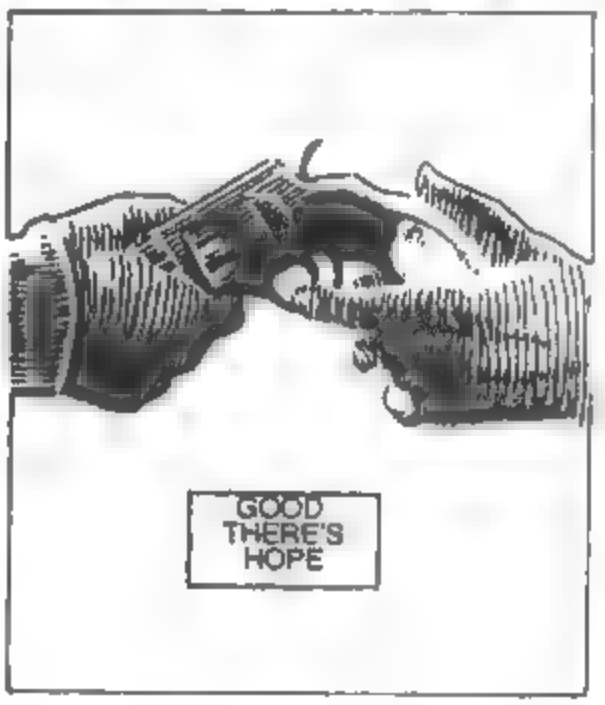
The Day Prize recipient for 2003

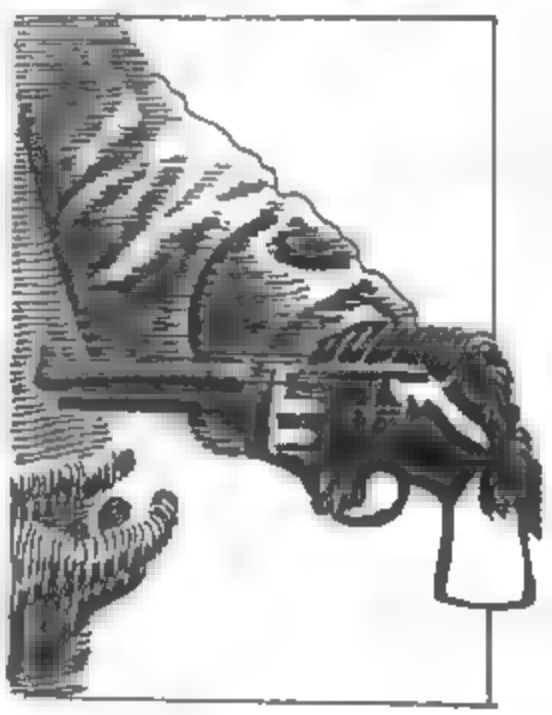


ASKARI HODARI by Glenn Brewer

I DON'T BELIEVE THIS KID IS A KILLER BUT I'M NOT CERTAIN. IF HE ISN'T AND HE GOES TO JAIL HE WILL PROBABLY BECOME ONE. I DON'T WANT THAT







SHADOW PRESS

The Day Prize recipient for 2003

I'M SURE HE KNOWS WHAT GUNS DO TO PEOPLE. I SHOW HIM THAT THEY DO NOTHING TO ME. WHEN HE WATCHES ME SHOOT MYSELF, HE LOOKS AS IF HE'S SEEN A GHOST. THAT'S EXACTLY WHAT I WANT HIM TO BELIEVE.
IT'S INTERESTING HOW THE CONTEXT IN WHICH A THING IS DONE AFFECTS THE WAY THAT A THING IS PERCEIVED. SEEING A STRONG MAN AT A CIRCUS BEND A STEEL BAR WOULD AMUSE MOST PEOPLE. SEEING A MAN BEND THE BARREL OF A GUN HE'S JUST SHOT HIMSELF WITH WOULD MAKE MOST PEOPLE NOT ONLY QUESTION THEIR VISION BUT ALSO THEIR SANITY.
I TELL HIM THAT IF WE MEET AGAIN UNDER SIMILAR CIRCUMSTANCES, HE WILL WISH THAT WE HADN'T. I THINK HE BELIEVES ME. IF BEING SCARED IS THE ONLY HARM THIS KID GETS FROM THIS EXPERIENCE, I CAN LIVE WITH THAT. IF HE'D PULLED THAT GUN ON A COP, HE WOULDN'T BE SCARED. HE WOULD BE DEAD. I HOPE I'VE SAVED HIS LIFE.

What up wit' that?

Taylor. I acknowledge that, but let's be realistic You're a janitor and I am an attorney. What possible future could we have? Don't take this the wrong way, but I did not go through twenty years of school just so I could support a grown man for the rest of my life.

Me? I'm thinking "arrogant feminist bitch". "Faith" reads the same thing and sees a positive portrayal of a female character. You can't ask for better than that as a writer

I had a chance to chat with Glenn for a few minutes after the Day Prize ceremony last year, asking him about his long-term plans for *Askari Hodari* as an on-going title (he had mentioned something about an *Askari Hodari* movie on stage after I had presented him with his second nominee plaque which made me think, "Well, shit. There goes Glenn."). As it turns out, *Askari Hodari isn't* an on-going title. It's a beginning-middle-and-ending story. Five or six issues. Since it takes about a year for Glenn to produce one of them that means the whole thing should be wrapped up by the time next year's S.P.A.C.E. show rolls around, at which time he plans to collect the whole thing as a trade paperback. And then, why not? Here's a road map for a movie, the same as the Wachanski Brothers did with Geoff Darrow's artwork in pitching *The Matrix*. And Glenn can move his cast and crew (Scott Woods and Arron Putnam are credited as editors) on to his next project, hopefully with enough Hollywood money to speed up his frequency of publication on the next one

Or maybe, "there goes Glenn" and the next time we hear about him he'll be out in Hollywood, giving Spike Lee a run for his money. Spike's been out there a while now. How black can he still be?

You can order the complete Askari Hodari at Askarihodari.com or from Glenn Brewer, 427 Oak St. Apt. B1, Columbus, Ohio, 43215. Mention Cerebus and Glenn will autograph the set for you. $15.^00 U.S includes postage.

correspondence

Aardvark Comment

October 7, 2003

Re: "Why Canada Slept"

My God, Dave, how do you stand it?

Regards,
Greg Zarcone
3736 Longship Place
Tampa, Florida
33607

1) My God 2) scripture 3) prayer 4) fasting 5) reading the National Post *6) not going out 7) not talking to anyone (apart from amiable chit-chat with store clerks and waitresses). The 7-step guide to a satisfying life in Canada's feminist dictatorship.*

* * * * * * *

November 15, 2002

Dear Dave,

Becoming enmeshed in your "weltanschauung" (world view) as I have in the last several years, there are many things I'd like to say to you. And even tho' some of them might piss you off, the fact that I disagree with about 30-40% of your most fervid opinions does not mean I don't respect your (near?) monomaniacal pursuit of articulating your well-stated positions.

In other words, as a card-carrying curmudgeon and certified old fart, I not only find your iconoclastic essaying (assaying?) admirable, but also challenging, educational, wide-ranging and unique. And congratulate you for hewing to Polonius' dictum to Laertes "And above all to thine own self be true."

However, the impulse to write was originally struck by one assertion (*Cerebus* 280) in your truly moving and eye-opening series "Islam, My Islam." So at this posting I correspond neither to praise nor to bury Sim (or "Simism"), but rather to share what I think are some very interesting parallels between Islam and the history of America's most successful home-grown religion

You state, "...and it would be hard to imagine even the most radical, the most extreme Jewish or Christian partisan of any Jewish or Christian sect daring to describe a flesh-and-blood human being, a contemporary, as the 'only Jewish figure in the world who has maintained the pure word of Moses' or 'the only Christian ruler who has maintained the pure word of Jesus Christ "

Well, this is certainly a minor quibble in the context of your larger points, but I happen to be from Utah, see and...and so know personally and verifiably that there are over 10 million pretty decent people in the world who totally accept the notion that their religion's founders and the founder's successors are indeed the only persons actually maintaining the pure traditions of Jesus; and that in fact, while every righteous person goes to heaven, only their members have a chance to achieve the highest degree of heavenly glory. But rather than being "exclusivist," and inward-oriented, this drives them to convert everyone else in the world (albeit in an unrelentingly friendly way that really bears little resemblance to forced infidel conversion of conquered people) so that all can share the highest celestial

grandeurs (no multiple virgins there, tho', as far as I know, despite their history).

Interestingly, in the light of your history of Islam, these now mostly mellow and mainstream missionaries were polygamy-practicing religiously radical outcasts forcibly driven from upstate NY (and then from Ohio, and then from Illinois[!!] by every stripe of Protestants and Catholics) to seek a (very large) haven in a then undesirable great desert in 1847—where even in their own territory they were later pursued by a sizeable contingent of the US Army dispatched there in 1885 with the specific mission of disbanding their religious and marriage practices. The calvary charged in, by the by, at the behest of a Congress who liked to use the group as whipping boys and they also made great media demons. (See? The more things change...)

(In fact, lost in stereotype is the fact that less than 1% of Mormons were ever involved in polygamy even at its height [1850's-1880's].)

Also interestingly, the murder of the founder, Joseph Smith, in 1844 (in Illinois—he never saw Utah [never rode into Mecca])—at the hands of a gentile (i.e., non-Mormon)—mob in their then-Illinois headquarters city of Nauvoo (their forced ever westward journey occupied their first 17 years), caused a great (i.e., Sunni/Shiite level) schism.

The main group united under the leadership of a church official, Brigham Young (here fulfilling the Abu Bakr role), who led the Saints on their long trek to "Deseret" (part of which later became Utah—more on this later), whereas the rump group (led by key members of Joseph Smith's family) felt the mantle of "prophet, seer and revelator" should fall to the descendants of Joseph (here as Ali, except there was a Joseph Smith, Jr [actually J.S. III, I believe] and no young Mohammed).

Funny how these things work out. I should mention, however, that significant members of the Smith family ended up with the main group in Salt Lake City, including some of Joseph's brothers, while mom and wife and son ended up founding the Reorganized Church of Latter Day Saints in Missouri—a group with no history of polygamy as far as I know—and also with much less missionary zeal (thus cumulatively possibly explaining why they were not driven out of old Mizzou)—but which also (again probably as a cumulative result) is about 1/20 the size (I'm guessing) of the main LDS Church—and still known to "regular Mormons" (which some would call an oxymoron) as "Reorganites" (where known at all—the split was complete and it was long ago).

The R-LDS Church (kind of like DVD and DVD-R, huh?) has been recently self-renamed as the Community of Christ Church (I assume to further establish their own identity and move on from the competition to just do their own thing. As in "we lost the battle to be recognized as the LDS church, they will always be THE church associated with Joseph Smith, so let's get on with our own gig already."

So I lied: not quite Shiite/Sunni level antagonism, but it was a big deal at the time, and still a decent analog. If one wants to search for the hallmark of Christian/Christian blood bitterness, there are certainly the post-Reformation religious wars in Europe...granted, they took place 1500 years after the founder's death, but they managed nonetheless to work up a very commendable degree of murderous behavior and the principals were able to maintain such (un)civil conditions for many decades, or maybe even centuries (my history on this is weak). However long the duration though, kudos to all involved, I'm sure.

But I digress. The Utah LDS contingent wouldn't have put it this way, but they saw themselves in essence as the "real Reformation", i.e., that doctrinal rot, leadership lacking any true divine inspiration and organizational corruption had permeated both the scriptures and structures of organized Christendom and they set out to purify both with new scriptures, new doctrines and leadership which claimed a direct and exclusive hotline to the Almighty's plan for human beings on earth. (I've also heard the Mormon Church referred to as the "American Reformation.")

By the by, the Mormons hated being called Mormons for a looong time: Mormon is a character in the closing part of the Book of Mormon scriptures (which are now tag-lined as "an alternate testimony of Jesus Christ in the Americas" in the church's ubiquitous cable TV PSA's).

General (I think) Mormon's main claim to theological distinction came in his directing the burying of the history of his people—his people being the Western hemisphere descendants of ancient Israelites who migrated to the New World by raft at approximately the time of the Tower of Babel according to their theology (make that our theology—I was raised LDS—and in Utah—if you haven't guessed). The history was recorded on golden plates and Mormon was in charge of the plates at the end of a great continents-spanning struggle which had effectively wiped out his culture—which is presumably how the buried plates (translated by Joseph under divine guidance and only seen by a literal handful of the inner LDS circle) came to be found in 1830 in upstate New York by Joseph Smith operating under divine guidance.

Smith also finished much of a new translation of the Bible, but the modern Church, while acknowledging (and still publishing?) the "inspired version," officially uses the King James Bible—even while reserving the right to accept its dicta "only insofar as they translated correctly" (one of 13 LDS Articles of Faith I was expected to memorize as a child), meaning that in any doctrinal matters Book of Mormon doctrine (a direct, divinely inspired translation) always trumps the KJ Bible (which, face it, is a re-re-re-translation of original scriptures by a group of 15th Century English intellectuals, priests and playwrights[!] including William Shakespeare himself.) And even most of the original New Testament scriptures, including the main gospels, were written long after the historical events laid down in them.

Back to the fairly strong parallels to your own essay (I realize I've meandered from that initial plan, but if you're still with me, I appreciate your indulgence): The territorial government of Utah was much more akin to

the early Muslim model than to the typical Christian one. ("Only in Islam is faith and temporal power unashamedly united as the two sides of the same coin."—*Cerebus* 279).

The "State of Deseret" as laid out and claimed by the church leadership included not only present-day Utah, but large chunks of Wyoming, Colorado, Idaho, New Mexico, Arizona, nearly all of Nevada and a wide corridor extending to the California coast, and was at least somewhat intended by the Church (after its continuous history of persecution) from the beginning more as a nation state—with a secure impregnable mountain haven capital and guaranteed overseas imports with its Southern California port—than as a US state—and so in concept was a place where they couldn't be put back under anyone's thumb or ever be driven out yet again

[Still, though, it's notable that Joseph Smith himself had run for President of the United States in the pre-Utah time. Meaning they hadn't given up all faith in the US at that point, but also revealing the earliest manifestations of their blending of political and religious power.]

Note: According to Atomica.com: "Deseret (deh-ser-ette) – An area proposed by the Mormons in 1849 as an independent state or a state of the Union. Deseret would have included much of the southwest United States, with a capital at Salt Lake City. Congress refused to recognize the provisional state and created the Utah Territory in 1850."

"Deseret" has nothing to do with "Desert" – The word has no linguistic provenance that I can discover, but the meaning is "Industry," and even today the beehive (ideal socialist community with a single leader – ironic for the now most solidly Republican state in the Union) is the state symbol (and the bee is the state insect), and both symbol and bug tie in with the State motto (Yep, "Industry").

(Deseret Lives!)

Brigham Young, simultaneously President and Prophet of the Church and the Territorial Governor in fact ran exactly the Caliphate-like amalgam of a theocratic-socialist-polygamous state where there was scarcely a glimmer of light between the religious and civil aspects of life, and where one's degree of participation in high ratio polygamy was positively correlated to one's standing in the church/community

All of these interesting and unique (for Western cultures at least) social experiments passed into history as national politics and military force combined to pin back the ears of the church leadership and as the Desertarians were becoming surrounded by larger numbers of new, non-Mormon immigrants.

And indeed, as mentioned before, they were so unpopular in the nation that anti-LDS federal laws were passed at a time when there was an acute need for senators and reporters to keep the public's mind off of other issues they'd rather not discuss (which is most of the time for politicians then and now). And so the church, with at last no place left to go in the Continental US, faced a moment of truth – thus polygamy was strictly banned and the Church adopted a much lighter touch in trying to influence the course of governing Utahns' lives while remaining full steam ahead on saving their souls. The result wasn't exactly "church-free" government (and still isn't 100% hands-off even today), but every government in the world has influential insiders of one sort of another

This basically peaceful and enduring outcome (there were a few Mormon "terrorists" implicated in a handful of documented acts against non-Mormons traveling through early Utah, but no "martyrs," and not for many decades now) paved the way for Utah's admission into the Union in 1896 with very traditional marriage laws and a very typical civil constitution. At that point then, to continue the analogy, but not until that point did the Church go the direction of previous Christian sects, i.e., becoming more of a (fairly) purely religious Holy Mormon Empire, only indirectly pulling the strings of government, rather than embodying church and state, earth and heaven all in one

Another parallel is that today's Mormons have got "infidelism" down to a moderate Muslim "T." The church constantly has many thousands of all volunteer missionaries circling the globe 24/7. Like Muslims, the Mormon Church sees its mission as making heaven and salvation available to every human being who's ever lived (including in the LDS case by proxy baptism and missionaries in heaven [!] giving everyone up there a chance to correct for their having been born before Christ and before the Mormons, and also to those who never heard of them, and even those who rejected them on earth), and so the great unwashed everywhere need to learn the essentially Muslim-style lesson that "1. God is Great, 2 that there is no other God than God and 3 that Joseph Smith and his successor prophets are his messengers."

Note: This is why the LDS church is the world leader in Genealogical research and methodology, and why they keep their genealogy records in a mountain vault long popularly reputed to be stronger than the one for the Strategic Air Command on the other side of the Rocky Mountains

(Rather clever of Mormons—and Christianity in general—keeping a vital Caliphate—it makes sense to me that Islam has remained mired in seventh-eleventh century theological formulations partly because it's too decentralized in both structure and geography to evolve in any coherent way except towards recurrent local mutant strains of radicalism. So no Pope to rebel against also plausibly helps explain why there's never been an Islamic Reformation, and little prospect of one any century soon.)

Further they believe that their role in spreading their

message to all is to presage the second coming of Christ and the establishment of a perfect planet-wide religious state for a millennium (Hence the "Latter Day Saints" part of their name). Unlike the history of Islam, though, forced conversions and disembowelment of infidels have never been practiced, however it is notable that only in Utah is a Jew a gentile (non-Mormon)……

Finally a modern-day parallel that you didn't make, but every other media outlet has, refers to Islam as "the fastest-growing religion in the world." The point here is to at least parse that statement, i.e., to point out that Mormonism is not only the fastest growing Christian sect in the world (proportionally), it is also the proportionally fastest growing religion in the world, period. That didn't seem big beans when there were a few hundred thousand Mormons, but it's more impressive now that the rolls are moving towards the tens of millions… …so watch out Osama, and keep those wives pregnant or you'll be overrun by a billion smiling young men in dark blue suits wearing black name tags who have a free book for you……

Anyway, just thought you'd possibly find this interesting in the sense that I think it actually enhances rather than contradicts the thrust of your narrative. In fact I had actually a sense of feeling eerie once or twice when I started to really think about and compose this sidebar.

And I guess I should've titled this excursion, "Mormondom, My Mormondom."

Regards,

Jim Keller
62 B Heitman Drive
Spring Valley, N.Y. 10977

PS: For context, my own LDS Church status is that of non-practicing admirer of the people who raised me to be a half-decent human being.

PPS: As this has sat waiting to be proofed for months, I want to add that in total at this critical time in Muslim/non-Muslim relations your account is simply the best info I've found on the history of Islam. Period.

Interesting. The only time I was ever in Salt Lake was for a signing at Mimi Cruz's Night Flight Comics (now with two great locations to serve you in the Salt Lake City area) in the Cottonwood Mall on South Highland Drive Actually it's Alan and Mimi's Night Flight Comics, but if you've ever met them you wouldn't be apt to hear Alan for the first day or so. I kid Mimi. She's actually one of the few ardent feminists I get along with because she really does make an effort to try to understand other viewpoints (which have to be inserted edgewise into her conversation on those rare occasions that she stops to take a breath). We spent a fair amount of time together when she gave me the grand tour of Salt Lake City and environs, including Donner Pass and the Mormon Tabernacle One of the stops we made was at the Beehive House or the Lion and Beehive House, which was, evidently, one of Brigham Young's many residences containing one or more of his many families. Anyway, after taking the tour, Mimi was kidding me that I must've thought the Beehive House was a great idea—a pure patriarchal-and-no-questions-asked environment. I shook my head. "Not patriarchal. Kevillist." I said, using my own distinction between a daughter-centred environment and a mother-centred environment. "The two biggest bedrooms at the front of the house on the second floor were his daughters'. His wife was stuck in a little bedroom off to the side. His sons had little broom closets at the back of the house." (it made me smile the way the female tour guide, with practiced diffidence, informed us that the sons didn't need big bedrooms because they were out working in the fields all day.) "Definitely a Kevillist."

The next day, Alan and Mimi and I had lunch with a reporter from The Desert News *by the name of Craig Holyoak (Hi, Craig!). Mimi couldn't wait to tell me how impressed Craig had been with my observation. "You mean, he knows nothing about…(and here he mentioned whatever the daughters came to be known as in the LDS faith after the death of Brigham Young. The Seven Stalwarts or the Seven Somethings. Evidently they ended up pretty much running the state and the church.)"*

It was no big deal. If you want to know who's in charge, just look for the biggest bedrooms.

The Church of LDS, it seems to me, was the Kevillist equivalent of Cirlnist Islam, where the Prophet's wives (called, after the death of the Prophet, the Mothers of the Faith, even though none of them, technically, were mothers) gained, in my view, too great prominence after his death (and effectively eradicated the Prophet's chosen successor and his family)

* * * * * * *

July 15, 2001

Dave:

Well! What a long strange trip it has been! Wow. I cannot even *remember* the last time I wrote a letter to you. It has been several years, that's for sure. However, I should note that I have never let my interest in *Cerebus* lapse during all of that time. Yes, I have continued to buy (and more importantly, *read*) every single issue. Month after month, year after year. Some were good, some were lesser efforts. All were at least worth looking at. Now we approach The End. True, *Cerebus* 300 is still some time away (32 issues, as we speak), but I figured this was as good a time as any to "touch base" with you, and maybe drop a random comment or two (or three or four).

First of all, I cannot help but wonder what is in store for you (and Ger) following the release of the highly anticipated #300. Have you accumulated enough wealth that you can retire, or is there another multi-decade project in the offing? Hey, if it's none of my business (and it probably isn't), feel free to say so, but I think we're all dyin' to know something… *anything*! Throw us a bone, man! (But *not* a *Bone*! I stopped reading it long ago. In fact, *Cerebus* is—believe it or not—the *ONLY* "comic

book" that I still purchase on a regular basis... I neither have the time, nor the interest, nor the moolah to bother with any other ones any more. It's as simple as that.)

Secondly, I have been reading, with complete fascination and at times sheer dread, your controversial "Tangents" [*sic*] as well as your replies to the various published letters in the latest issues of *Cerebus*. Y'know, I could be wrong here (hey, nobody's perfect—not even you!), and perhaps the letters you have been showing us have skewed my own perception of things, but I gotta figure that *most* of the reaction to your recently-stated opinions has been negative or, at best, mockingly sympathetic (e g.: "there, there, Dave, it'll all be OK in the end, you'll see"). You even said it yourself, in a rebuttal that appeared in issue #268, that if one tries to "adhere to masculine principles, ethic and scruples in a feminist world you will, likely as not, end up having few if any friends... (and) universally despised and maligned." Therefore, you must feel like you are in an incredibly small minority, an "exile" of society if you will (or perhaps I should say you have willingly exiled yourself *from* society)

But why? What's your self-imposed isolation *for*? I think I may have figured out your core motivation in all of this. I was struck by this "revelation" (pun intended) earlier today while leafing through *The Viking Book of Aphorisms* by W.H. Auden and Louis Kronenberger. The very first quotation selected for the "Religion and God" chapter of their collection was this one by George Santayana: "*People who feel themselves to be exiles in this world are mightily inclined to believe themselves citizens of another.*" So there you have it. Deep down, deep *deep* down, despite all of your humble protestations that you are "completely ignorant in these matters" (when it comes to knowing who's going to Heaven or to The Other Place), and that "we'll all find out on the Last Day what happens to all of us," it's obvious to me that *you* have determined, maybe just on a subconscious level, that *you*, Dave Sim, creator of *Cerebus*, are now on the straight and narrow path which will take *you*, Dave Sim, to God Our Father, the creator of *ALL* of us. And yet you seem to be *reluctant* to admit this! Why? What nobler goal *is* there?

I dunno, maybe you *will* continue to deny this self-evident truth. Maybe you'll respond with "Oh, of course, we all *hope* we're going to Heaven," or "I would never presume to state what only God can know," or something aloof like that, but ***come on***! Have you started out on this lonely, indeed damn near solitary path with absolutely *no* thought of a "reward?" Needless to say, nobody out there—heck, not even O.J. Simpson—actually thinks that they will wind up in *HELL*. Therefore, why *not* take a stand? Reject your false modesty! Confess to us that yes, you *will* be "knock- knock-knockin' on heaven's door" at the End of Time. *Teach* us, O Great and Powerful Sim! Show *us* The Way!

Hee hee, that was *fun*! But seriously, I couldn't be more impressed with you and the difficult road you have ahead. Getting into Heaven ain't easy, is it? Tell me, have you looked into the *Gnostic* perspective on all of this? If so, I would be most interested to read your thoughts on *their* thoughts. If you haven't, then I would like to recommend to you "The Gnostic Gospels" by Elaine Pagels, for starters. After you read that, you will likely want to read for yourself, as I have, some of the full-length Gnostic scriptures that are only quoted from or even barely mentioned in the Pagels book.

In order to do *that*, you really should consult a somewhat weightier tome, called *The Nag Hammadi Library*. It was edited by James M. Robinson and was originally published in 1978 (however, be sure to get the subsequently-released "Revised" Edition) It is still the definitive English translation of the literature of Classic Christian Gnosticism. I anticipate that you will discover many wonderful things of interest therein (whether you 'buy' into any of them will be up to you). I think in particular you will enjoy "The Gospel of Thomas." There are, in total, 114 "sayings" in that particular 2nd-century(?) Gnostic tract, but I will quote a few of them for you below, merely to whet your appetite:

> *"These are the secret sayings which the living Jesus spoke and which Didymos Judas Thomas wrote down*
>
> *And (Jesus) said, 'Whoever finds the interpretation of these sayings will not experience death'*
>
> *Jesus said, 'Let him who seeks continue seeking until he finds. When he finds, he will become troubled. When he becomes troubled, he will be astonished, and he will rule over the all'*
>
> *Jesus said, 'I shall give you what no eye has seen and what no ear has heard and what no hand has touched and what has never occurred to the human mind.'*
>
> *'I shall choose you, one out of a thousand, and two out of ten thousand, and they shall stand as a single one.'*
>
> *'It is to those [who are worthy of my] mysteries that I tell my mysteries.'*
>
> *'He who will drink from my mouth will become like me... (and) the things that are hidden will be revealed to him.'*
>
> *Simon Peter said to them, 'Let Mary leave us, for women are not worthy of life.' Jesus said, 'I myself shall lead her in order to make her male, so that she too may become a living spirit resembling you males. For every woman who will make herself male will enter the kingdom of heaven."*

Interesting stuff, eh? It's simply *amazing* to me how little-known these essential Gnostic writings are today, even to a (supposedly) well-read Christian. Oops, "well-read Christian" is a bit of an oxymoron, isn't it? All kidding aside—how many self-confessed "born again" believers even bother to read the Bible *itself* anymore, let alone anything else? I have even heard that Catholics are actually *discouraged* from reading the Bible outside of church, as that may lead to some *non*-Catholic interpretations of their own!

By the way, the above-mentioned "Gospel of Thomas" is also available separately, in two or three dif-

ferent versions. I'm sure your local bookstore could provide you with a list of all of them. The best of the bunch, however, is Marvin Meyer's self-described "fresh" English translation, which was published in 1992. It's a slim thing, only 130 pages long, but it still manages to include not only Meyer's excellent interpretation, but also: the *original* text (in Coptic, no less!), an extensive & helpful bibliography, and even a closing commentary provided by Harold Bloom (the author of *The American Religion*, which happens to be yet *another* book you may wish to track down).

Finally, I'm *not* claiming here to be a 'neo-Gnostic' myself, or that *you* ought to become one, and I certainly do not embrace all or even most of their various (and at times contradictory!) Christian teachings. However, I *am* saying that the long-dead Gnostic 'branch' of Christianity is well-worth investigating if you haven't done so already, that is. That's all. End of sermon. And, end of letter! I'd like to close with this quote by Goethe which somehow feels appropriate: "Know thyself? If I knew myself, I'd run away." Thanks for your time. Stay the course. Keep the faith. Yada yada yada.

Still a fawning *Cerebus* fan (albeit a sometimes sarcastic one).

Conrad P. Felber
242 St. Charles Street
Sudbury, Ontario
P3C 2Z2

Well, first of all, I see "God the Father" as a YHWHist insult—implying that God procreates the way any human father procreates, that is, through animalistic lust. I think God acquiesced to the title so that the debate could progress since YHWH, like any female, won't let go of her prejudices until their falsehood is irrefutably demonstrated (and then only grudgingly).

My best advice is to submit yourself to God's will. I know nothing about you or anyone, Conrad, just as you know nothing about me or anyone.

As to whether or not I'm going to heaven or Heaven, as I've stated several times, as far as I can see, heaven is just earth's atmosphere. I do believe that God is extremely fair in his judgements but...

I'm an also-ran, Conrad. I always have been and I always will be. I work hard, I try hard, I'm reasonably patient, I think. But all my life I've always ended up dealt out of the game or voted off the island or whatever it is where you end up on the outside looking in. I don't foresee that changing. However, that doesn't change my decision to pray five times a day, to fast in Ramadan, to observe a Sabbath and to read aloud to myself from God's sacred scriptures, to give a substantial portion of my income to the poor and to gradually eliminate as many of my sins and vices as I can. Faint hope is better than no hope. But I would have to have some precedent in my life for being a success instead of an also-ran and/or failure and I don't have that. So, I'm just going to do what I've always done. Work hard, try hard, be patient and just accept that it's never going to get me anywhere. In this life or the next. I think there was and is value in finishing Cerebus. *I think the book will be of value to our society as that society gradually outgrows and sheds its feminist delusions. But that process shows no signs of even beginning at this point and I doubt it will until long after I'm dead*

The Gnostic gospels—like all the New Testament Apocrypha which I have read are, to me, just so much YHWHist he/she/it tripe. "For every woman who will make herself male will enter the kingdom of heaven." Sorry, Conrad. Sounds like the Gospel According to Roseanne Barr

* * * * * * *

Monday, March 20, 2000

Dear Mr. Sim;

Before I get to the point of my letter—which is a complaint, a nitpick, if you will—let me first establish my credentials. My wife and I won, as a runner-up prize in a CBG contest, a three-month subscription to *Cerebus*. I enjoyed that so much that I've purchased every issue since then and have read backwards to *Jaka's Story*. You have done much to reaffirm my faith in the limitless potential of the comic medium. I have been known to aver "Even using the strictness definition of the word 'genius' the world of comics has at least two – Will Eisner and Dave Sim."

I am a big fan. Big.

So, why do you write things like "Uncle Julius' Ring Around the Bathtub Gin", and "Cerebus' guy". Don't you have your *Strunk and White*? Haven't you read rule number one: "Form the possessive singular of nouns by adding 's,... i.e. Charles's friend, Burns's poems" Uncle Julius's Ring Around the Bathtub Gin and Cerebus's guy.

Yeah, it's nitpicky; I told you it was going to be nitpicky. But it's jarring to my disbelief-suspension; it always reminds me that I'm reading and not on the road with Cerebus and Jaka.

Hell, on second thought, never mind. For all I know it's a Canadian thing—or a genius thing.

Thank you and Gerhard for Cerebus.

Robert Loy
114 Gatewood Street
North Charleston, SC
29418

The first time I saw "s's" was in Epic Magazine *in the introduction to Ger's and my first collaboration, "His First Fifth": "Cerebus's". Up until that moment, the possessive form of any word that ended in an "s" was created by adding an apostrophe after the "s". This "s's" "innovation" struck me as being analogous to Orwell's "newspeak," that idiosyncrasy of totalitarians to arbitrarily change rules: in no small part, I suspect, to see what they can get away with and how effortlessly they can persuade the population that the new rule has always been there (as a way of testing the boundaries of*

what they can try to get away with next). Given that feminism continues its steady march to universal hegemony, I see it as a first priority of the free-minded to adhere to the rules of spelling and grammar which they first learned so as to indicate to the totalitarian minded that "I, for one, am not and do not intend to be 'easy totalitarian pickings' for you".

Ger and I both appreciate your kind words and your continued patronage. Yours was obviously the best investment of a complimentary three-month subscription in our history.

* * * * * * * *

March 28, 2000

Dear Dave,

I just finished reading the entire run of *Cerebus* up to issue #251. Absolutely amazing shit. It took me seven or eight weeks to get caught up. There were a few rough patches (*Melmoth*, somehow sticks out...sorry, Dave), but I made it. Even as my girlfriend Nicole bitched and moaned, "Put that damn comic book down and spend some quality time with me! Stupid fucking aardvark!", I plowed through, drooling for more as each issue ended. But I'm not really writing to kiss your ass. The real reason I decided to write you is to thank my friends for turning me on to your book.

I've read comics for 14 years and this year is the first time I have ever had friends who actually read them too. Hell, it's pretty much the first time I have had more than two friends, period. I've always wanted to pick up *Cerebus*. But with a whole bunch of phone books between me and whatever issue you were currently working on, I got scared. Then one day I just kind of fell in with this group of punks who dig funny books as much as I do and we've been drinking, talking and tackling each other ever since.

When we first started hanging out most of our conversations centered on comic books (okay Nicole, they still do). Anyway, talking led to borrowing books I had never read and lending out my stuff to whoever needed it. Eventually *Cerebus* entered the trading pool. So now, 251 issues later I'm writing this sappy ass letter to a bunch of guys that I hope to be drinking beers and talking comics with for a long time—Jamie, Dan, Erik, Matt and Chedy (Yeah, that isn't a misprint. Fucking Chedy. We still ask.)

Cerebus is the best comic book series I have ever read. Maybe saying that is just the rush of reading the entire run in such a short amount of time? I don't know But then again, who reads 251 issues that fast if he or she doesn't fucking love the ride? I don't know a better way to say thank you to my friends than to have this letter printed in the back of *Cerebus*. I look forward to the last four years and I hope all my buds will be around to talk about the conclusion when it comes. Thanks Dave

Sincerely,
Markisan "My name isn't a misprint either" Naso
Syracuse, NY

PS I love you Nicole! Um, don't hurt me for my statements above. Please blame Dave. He created the fucking aardvark.

So, are you and Nicole still together? Hi to Jamie, Dan, Erik, Matt and Chedy. And thanks for the kind words, four years later

* * * * * * * *

24 July 2001

Dave,

Re: issue 268, your reply to Larry Hart #5

Dante said that the non-Christians went to Hell, but that the quality of their afterlives matched the quality of their lives. Hell isn't described so much as an assigned punishment, than simply a place where the sins of life are enacted after death, merely stripped of all pretence and delusion. Non-Christians are in Hell by virtue of missing out on the ecstasy taking place in Heaven. Sort of an eternal waiting room, but no less pleasant than when they were alive. (I follow basic Taoism as closely as I can, if that means anything to you.)

Best,

Mike Leung
1926 Contra Costa Blvd.,
Pleasant Hill, California
94523

"Long life and good fortune". I just looked it up Doesn't say anything about God, so I assume that it's a humanist "man is the measure of all things" gig. As I said to Chet, everyone makes his own choice as to what he or she is going to bring before God on Judgement Day.

I believe that we are sorted out after death and we either go to Heaven (i e. earth's atmosphere) or Hell (the earth's molten core), but I think both of these are, as you succinctly put it, Judgement Day waiting rooms. That is, I suspect that their conventional portrayals are a conceit on the part of YHWH in his/her/its delusional state that he/she/it is the final arbiter when it comes to the disposition of souls. I think the actual sorting process is conducted by God according to His far more exacting and omniscient standards of genuine spiritual merit and will probably involve a fair amount of re-sorting along more sensible lines (since YHWH's calls, according to the Torah, are mostly on the basis of those who love YHWH going to heaven and those who hate YHWH going to hell: shoddy, like all decision-making based on emotion). The re-sorting, I suspect, will be much to the chagrin of many and much to the joy of many others. This, it seems to me, is the process the Synoptic Jesus was referring to when he said that many who are first will be last and many who are last will be first. In that re-sorting process, I think it's a safe bet—as the Synoptic Jesus also said—that there will, indeed, be much wailing and gnashing of teeth.

* * * * * * *

September 28, 2003

Dear Dave,

I've been with you every month since issue 71. I've always meant to write you but every time I put together a letter, I just didn't think enough of it to send it in and interrupt you. Not that this one is going to be much better; it's just that I made a Most Solemn Vow to myself to write you before the books ends

I've met you and Ger a couple time (Curious Books in East Lansing, just before issue 100, I think? and at the Detroit stop of the 1992 US Tour). I think you'd remember me – I was the guy who mumbled a few words about how much I admired the book, got a head sketch, and hung around quietly for maybe 30 minutes watching you work. The next time we "met" was a couple years later in the pages of *Reads*, and the "interaction" that took place then was anything but superficial. As you said Alan Moore told you (all stories are true), it was for me a "genuine mystical experience." I suppose this letter is my way of "closing the loop", as it were You won't have much of a picture of who I am, much less (I'm sorry to say) a "genuine mystical experience" for taking the trouble to read what I have to say. (If you are ever in the Los Angeles area, however, I would do my damnedest to provide both, if you were so inclined.) So, without further ado·

Cerebus has been a big part of my intellectual and aesthetic life for most of my adulthood I can't pretend to have always understood what you're on about; I'd say I only "got" maybe a third of *Reads* the first time through, and only after a couple re-readings within the context of *Mothers and Daughters* and the storyline preceding it did it really kick me in the head. Like everybody else, I thought *Melmoth* was a dreadful bore, surely just a giant prank on your part, until a similar reread. (Now, if only I could have a similar epiphany with "Chasing YHWH"...)

Part of what I look forward to with your monthly "visits" is the certain knowledge that on some level, you are going to fuck with me. You fuck with me in ways that are much bigger than a "what happens next?" kind of a thing. You fuck with me in ways that family cannot, that friends will not, that even other artists dare not. If you were fucking with me just to fuck with me, well, no great shakes there. Been there and done that. In your case, the cuts and bruises I've sustained on this 20-some-odd year journey have fed in part to what I have decided—and what I have decided NOT—to be

I wanted you to know that I'm going to miss hearing from you every month. What am I, a glutton for punishment or what? Maybe I can talk one of my friends into coming over and jabbing me in the eye on the third Wednesday of every month .. no, that wouldn't work. I'll give him a cast iron skillet, a syringe, a scalpel, the complete works of John Milton, and a blowtorch and tell him to surprise me.

Sitting down with your work for twenty or thirty minutes each month isn't strictly an exercise in masochism, far from it The level of craftsmanship you and Ger put into each issue is just... astounding. That level of dedication and craft has also contributed to what I am and what I'm not. In your effort to capture capital-T Truth over the course of Cerebus' life, you've issued a challenge to every aspect of the life I'm leading right now. Those are the cuts and bruises whereof I speak.

So, yeah, what you're looking forward to — as the laying aside of a burden—I'm dreading a bit since it will carry with it a sense of loss. It's not just the little grey bastard that will be passing into the Great Beyond; it's not just the end of the little one-sided "chats" we have every month. I'm afraid I'm running out of reasons to visit the local comics shops. There are still some cartoonists producing interesting work that I will continue to follow—the D+Q crowd somes to mind—and of course I'll be interested in whatever you choose to do after *Cerebus*. But overall I don't find that much interesting work being done anymore, and comics shops just burn me out. You would think that after the great work that has been produced over the last twenty years or so, comics shops culture would have plenty of reasons to evolve. Quite the opposite—they're just not places geared towards an adult sensibility. I'll always love the medium, but perhaps it's time to abandon the monthly pamphlet culture and all that goes with it.

So that's what I wanted to tell you, for the most part. I hope it was less painful than being stuck in a wall with the "wuffa wuffa" guy blathering at you.

I have a couple of requests that I'd like to make before I go. If you don't have time to respond, I'll understand—I hope you consider the ideas just the same.

1) I guess I always pictured an "End of Cerebus" party somewhere once you were done. I know the days of Rock Star Cartoonist/Debaucher Dave Sim are behind us, and you may not be able to stomach the idea of hanging out with your adoring public for more than a few hours. But come on! It's the end of Cerebus! I'd like to give it a proper Viking funeral, and I'll fly to wherever you have it. And if you want to host it in LA—hey, *mi casa, su casa*.

2) This might be too much to hope for—but I'm going to ask anyway. I am indebted to the lengthy interviews you gave to Bissette and Spurgeon for *Comics Interview* and *TCJ* respectively... *Cerebus* is a complex book, and those interviews provided some insight to the way you connected ideas that would have been difficult for me to get at on my own. The problem is, they only cover up to about issue 200 and then you're on your own again. I know, given your response to a letter printed in 294, that you are plenty sick of explaining things. And for the most part, *TCJ* is a loathsome publication that I steadfastly avoid, and wouldn't expect you to work with.

Would you agree to sit for an interview by Cerebus fans, for Cerebus fans, focusing on the last 100 issues? Perhaps similar in format to what Jim Ottaviani did with you about ten years back. Maybe that way you can get all the major questions out of the way in one go. I would happily volunteer my time to organize the questions and

whatever else needed to be done. Of course, it can wait until whenever you have the time and the inclination—you sound like you're busy as heck right now.

And with that, I'll let you go. Thanks for everything. Don't be a stranger.

Greg Griffin
1101 Victoria Avenue
Venice, CA 90291

No, it was a great letter, Greg. Especially the cast iron skillet, syringe, scalpel, complete works of John Milton, blowtorch part. I laughed out loud at that one.

1) No. It just doesn't work. This requires far more elaboration than it's worth but, let's start with my "hypocritical liberals" observation from part three of "Getting Riel*": the idea of having an "End of Cerebus" party reminds me of an anecdote from Norman Mailer's* Armies of the Night:

> In fact, the last time Mailer had heard of Mitch Goodman was when the latter had led a small group of protesters out of the large hotel banquet hall where Hubert Humphrey was about to address the assorted literati and book reviewers of the American writing world at the National Book Award festivities in March, 1967. Mailer had not attended…he remembered being glad he had not attended, for if he had, would he have been ready to walk out with Mitch Goodman or not? The war in Vietnam was probably to be protested on every occasion, and any attempt to twist Hubert Humphrey's nose was, in all favorable winds, a venture to applaud, but the exodus from the National Book Award's assembly, as one might have predicted was small, pilgrim small, by reports not unfarcical: Jules Feiffer walked out with the demonstrators, then sneaked back to go to a party for Humphrey. Feiffer's comet had not been in ascendance since.

Although I am aware that for hypocritical liberals, it seems eminently sensible not to let principles stand in the way of a good party, I'm afraid I'm cut from a different cloth. Having been torn to shreds on the Internet on several occasions and having had no one stand up and say anything on my behalf and having been in receipt of not even a discrete word of encouragement from any quarter…

[after the issue 186 imbroglio, there was Chester Brown's "he's fun to jam with"; after Jeff Smith fabricated a story in his Comics Journal *"Trilogy Tour" issue interview about threatening to give me a fat lip, I heard from Don Simpson, who wanted to know if I wanted to go "splits" with him on a joint Cockroach/Megaton Man lawsuit against The Tick's Ben Edlund and Scott McCloud who called to ask if he could get a photo from the Northampton Summit on the Creator's Bill of Rights that he could use in* Reinventing Comics *(I dug some out, but, smelling a rat I held off. As well I did: the book stays just this side of libel in accusing me of being a misogynist)—in fact the only real support came from outside the comic-book field: English comedian Lenny Henry who offered to be my corner man ("stick and move, Champ, stick and move"). And after "Tangent" came out, I heard from Bill Willingham. Twice in fact. The first time to tell me just how bad my cyberspace lynching was (and to offer to let me take a poke at him for having his caricature of me run on the cover of the same issue of the* Comics Journal *that depicted me as a concentration camp guard—even though he hadn't been privy to the decision-making involved and in so doing, was, again, the only person in the comic-book field to date to express any kind of disapproval of that depiction) and the second time to tell me that the universal consensus on the Internet was that I was going to blow my brains out when* Cerebus *was done—presumably because I had no friends. I assured him that I had long before figured out that an old aphorism about Hollywood—"if you want a friend in Hollywood, buy a dog"—applied equally to the comic book field.]*

I'm afraid that it's not just the cabal of character assassins who have laboured so intensively to destroy me and my reputation that I have taken note of. Unlike hypocritical liberals, I don't consider fence-sitting in the face of such character assassination as being appreciably different from the character assassination itself. And since everyone in the comic-book field besides Chester Brown and Bill Willingham happily sat on the fence, seeing no need to contact me or to offer a dissenting word against the mob, I am scarcely predisposed to mount some big "Aardvarks Over San Diego"-style shindig to help reinforce for the character assassins and the fence-sitters that I share in their delusion that we are all one big happy family, that I deserved what I got, that it was all a big publicity stunt, that they forgive me for having a character they felt compelled to assassinate or whatever other vacuous self-deceptions they peddle to themselves in the secret counsels of their sleep to excuse to themselves what I view as their inexcusable behaviour.

There may well be a half dozen Cerebus *fans somewhere scattered over the globe who did stand up on my behalf, even half-heartedly, (and I apologize to those individuals that there will be no "End of Cerebus" party had they been inclined to attend one) but, with God as my witness, those who actually contacted me were not that difficult to keep track of: Chet and Bill.*

All of that aside, I'm very much an also-ran. A Dave Sim party/signing consists of a half-dozen people standing around talking about everyone who didn't show up. "I can't believe Chi-chi isn't here. He swore he was going to be here." The last time we tried it was the '92 End of Tour party at Peter's Place, advertised it in the book, invited everyone we knew in the comic-book field and in town and had about two dozen people, total, show up. Mind you most of them drove a minimum of 500 miles (which was much appreciated), but it was still two dozen people out of however many thousands of people read the book at that time. Why? I'm the wrong

person to ask. I have no idea. But, my days of making two dozen people feel better about the fact that no one showed up for my party or signing are, I'm afraid, well behind me now.

It seems to me that this is what Cerebus *is about (and soon, we'll be able to say that this was what* Cerebus *was about): wherever you are reading this: on the subway, in your living room, sitting on the crapper, eating your breakfast cereal, taking a coffee break. In order to read all this tiny type and actually absorb it, you are ALONE.* Cerebus *is, as it has always been, a shared solitary event. That doesn't fit with "party". I think part of it is that you don't want me to feel bad. Not to worry. I don't feel. Bad or otherwise. If I felt, I would never have gotten this far. I'd be off somewhere feeling. You guys all did your job for* Cerebus *$2.25, $3.50 and £1.50 at a time. You made* Cerebus *happen without advertising or corporate sponsorship, marketing or merchandising. My best advice is to have your own "End of Cerebus" party, wherever you are. You deserve at least that much.*

As for me, I'll be buying Chet dinner in Toronto and someday I'd like to do the same for Bill Willingham. And Will Eisner has volunteered to buy me dinner in Florida. That's as much celebration of the "End of Cerebus" as I'm interested in.

And to end on a more cheerful note, if I hadn't been made inescapably aware of exactly how few friends I have in the comic-book field, I would never have found out the extent to which I very much prefer to be alone, in thought and in prayer. And how infinitely preferable God is as a friend when compared to those I thought were my friends. So, whatever else might be said, it all worked out for the best.

2) I do plan to go "live" on the Yahoo.com Cerebus newsgroup on the evening of the Wednesday "new comics day" (God willing) that Cerebus *300 arrives in the stores. Of course, I'll have to go to the library, rent the time, and get someone to show me how to "log on". The only previous experience I have had with that was at Jeff and Vijaya's place in California and it didn't work exactly smoothly. There was a lot of type appearing in the middle of what I was writing and it was hard to tell what people were writing with all the typos. But, I did promise to give it a try and the Yahoo.com Cerebus newsgroup has been a bright spot in the midst of all the character assassination. They are, by all accounts, an enterprising bunch who decided they wanted to talk about the 6,000 page story that many of them have been following for most of their adulthood instead of discussing how crazy Dave Sim is, how much everyone hates him, what a misogynist he is, how he's going to shoot himself when he's done and the other unpleasantries which the comic-book field has laboured for years to attach to the name Dave Sim. I know next to nothing about the Internet and what I do know holds very little interest for me, but it seems clear that the Yahoo.com newsgroup is going to be the primary* Cerebus *environment when the book is done, so if I can find a way to participate on an irregular schedule (I do plan to retire, you know) I'll certainly try my best. But, if it just doesn't work for me, it just doesn't work and I don't plan to spend two hours a month (or whatever) going, "How can they stand doing this? This is nuts." Which was my bottom line reaction the last time.*

And, as you can see from the back cover announcement, Craig Miller and John Thorne are going to be reviving the Cerebus Companion *as* Following Cerebus *(John's wife came up with the name). There, again, a lot depends on the reaction. It wouldn't surprise me if all 7,000 of our current readership jumps over to* Following Cerebus. *Just as it wouldn't surprise me if only a few hundred subscribe. I am aware that if I, basically, do the whole thing myself, that will increase the readership. But, I really don't want to work 12 hours a day anymore. Ger and I will do covers for it, and I've agreed to answer faxed interview questions for each issue and supply Craig and John with whatever we come up with that's interesting as we venture to the bottom of the piles and piles of boxes in the basement. Craig and John are very enthusiastic about the Yahoo.com newsgroup and think it'll be a great resource for their publication. I'll be forwarding all of the unanswered Aardvark Comment letters to them so they can bounce them back a few at a time as the new home of Aardvark Comment and I've hooked them up with a few of the guys I think can produce interesting material for them. But, I'm afraid, my biggest job when* Cerebus *is done will be attempting to discover and undo as much of the damage as has been done to mine and the book's reputations: to reassure retailers—most of whom, I imagine, get their news from the Internet—one at a time and by phone, that I am not the Antichrist, a suicidal loony, a misogynistic sexual predator or any of the other things that my legion of adversaries have been trying to make "stick" for the last nine years. The first period of time will be taken up with identifying how much damage has been done. Then I can get to work on rebuilding our credibility.*

And, really, Greg—you're not completely *"on your own," post-issue 200. All of the books from* Going Home *to* The Last Day *are (or will be) annotated, so I can't imagine there are too many questions about those (and that covers 232 to 300).*

I haven't been out of a four block radius in six months. I haven't done anything but finish the book and fill the back of the book and annotate the second last trade paperback and do interviews and take orders and process Visa and Mastercard orders and do filing for the better part of six years. I sincerely want to find out what it's like to do absolutely nothing.

(The last time that Seth and Chester and Joe Matt and I were at the "Jet Fuel" café, I said that out loud. There was a short pause and Joe said, "It's greeeaaat." I can't remember laughing that hard in a long time).

Put it this way: I will strive to find a balance between "going away" and "being at your beck and call". Closer to the former than the latter. Deal?

For exhibitor tables go to *www.backporchcomics.com* or Back Porch Comics P.O.Box 20550 Columbus OH 43220.
For hotel reservation go to *www.hicolumbuseast.com* enter group booking code *"ACE"* or call (614)-868-1380 (Tell them you're coming to SPACE for rate)

FOLLOWING CEREBUS

"Having published over sixty issues of Wrapped in Plastic*—the official David Lynch/*Twin Peaks *magazine—we are looking forward, in 2004, to reviving another Win-Mill Production.* The Cerebus Companion *under a new name:* Following Cerebus. *We believe that Dave Sim and* Cerebus *are an equally fascinating creator/creation subject, and we will spare no effort to make* Following Cerebus *the definitive print forum for discussions about (and as often as possible, with) Dave Sim regarding* Cerebus *in all its "something-like-a-phenomenon" aspects and permutations. We plan to discuss and to solicit contributions examining the individual* Cerebus *comic books and trade paperbacks as literate and provocative cultural artifacts of the late 20th and early 21st centuries, as a cumulative lodestone presence in the medium of the graphic novel, as a high watermark success story in DIY/self-publishing and as a lightning rod for the most controversial social issues of their time. We also intend to publish journalism about (and as often as possible, with) Dave Sim and Gerhard regarding* Cerebus *as a collaborative pictorial work of sequential comic-book art, both by discussing the creative content of that art and by reproducing as many rare, published and unpublished examples of the art itself as possible in each issue."*

CRAIG MILLER & JOHN THORNE, WIN-MILL PRODUCTIONS

"Since the immediate post-issue 300 plan is to begin the gargantuan task of 'unearthing' the dozens of cardboard boxes in the Off-White House basement unopened since we moved here in 1991, getting into order and preserving the Official Cerebus Archive *(as close as we can get to a complete record of everything that related even tangentially to the production of comics' only 6,000 page graphic novel) Craig and John's plan to revice* The Cerebus Companion *as* Following Cerebus *couldn't have come at a more opportune time both for us and them. I also plan to take a more 'hands-on' approach to* Following Cerebus *than has David Lynch with* Wrapped in Platic, *'sitting still' for a short interview in each issue, providing Craig and John with unpublished and not widely seen writings of my own,* Cerebus *out-take pages, correspondence over the years, other artists' depictions of* Cerebus, *bags of photographs, notebooks and access to individuals who were important in the development of the* Cerebus *work. Once the final 'Aardvark Comment' for issue 300 is composed, I'll be forwarding copies of all the remaining—and subsequent—letters on hand for Craig and John to run in* Following Cerebus *as they see fit."*

DAVE SIM

PLEASE NOTIFY YOUR LOCAL COMICS RETAILER THAT YOU ARE INTERESTED IN PURCHASING *FOLLOWING CEREBUS* WHEN IT BECOMES AVAILABLE. FOR MORE DETAILS (AS THEY BECOME AVAILABLE) REGARDING *FOLLOWING CEREBUS* LOG ON TO WWW.SPECTRUM-MAG.COM OR WWW.WRAPPEDINPLASTIC.COM

FOLLOWING CEREBUS

WHERE ISSUE 300 IS *JUST* THE BEGINNNING